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Mechanistic And Inhibitory Analysis Of Clostridium Difficile Associated Diseases

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**MECHANISTIC AND INHIBITORY ANALYSIS OF *CLOSTRIDIUM DIFFICILE*
ASSOCIATED DISEASES**

by

BRIANNA M. JACKMAN

THESIS

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

DECEMBER 2016

MAJOR: CHEMISTRY (biochemistry)

Approved by:

Advisor

Date

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this publication to my family
who has supported me, without question,
through thick and thin.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge four mentors who I feel are responsible for molding and guiding me through this academic journey: my high school chemistry teacher, Mr. Jeff Gartrell, who was the first person to instill within me a passion for chemistry; Dr. David Leonard who believed in me when I didn't believe in myself and inspired me to pursue biochemistry in graduate school; Dr. Tamara Hendrickson who has always been there, without judgment, to help me through the hard times; and my advisor, Dr. Andrew Feig, who made this publication possible and has implanted within me the critical thinking skills and confidence to become the scientist that I am today. I thank all of you for your tremendous and unveiling knowledge, support, and guidance. Moreover, I am grateful to all of my lab members throughout the years, especially Adam Boyden and Amit Kumar, who have supported, challenged, and shaped me not only as a scientist, but also as a person. Furthermore, I extend immense appreciation to my friends who have also supported me, but more significantly, taught me the importance of taking time to have fun and enjoy life. Lastly, I would like to express my greatest gratitude to my family: your love and support is the foundation of all I have accomplished and everything that is yet to come.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
List of Tables.....	v
List of Figures.....	vi
List of Abbreviations.....	viii
Chapter 1: <i>Introduction to the Clostridium difficile Pathogen and Associated Diseases</i>.....	1
Chapter 2: <i>Irreversible Inhibition of Clostridium difficile Toxin A Glucosyltransferase</i>	
<i>Activity via an Epoxide-Containing Peptide</i>	8
Chapter Two Methods.....	19
Chapter 3: <i>Glucosylation Drives the Innate Inflammatory Response to Clostridium difficile</i>	
<i>Toxin A</i>	24
Chapter Three Methods.....	30
Chapter 4: <i>Cloning, Expression, and Purification of Clostridium difficile Recombinant</i>	
<i>Toxin B</i>	33
Chapter Four Methods.....	41
Appendix I: <i>rTcdB-WT Sequence Alignment</i>.....	44
Appendix II: <i>rTcdB-GTD-NVN Sequence Alignment</i>.....	57
Appendix III: <i>pBMJ Plasmid Constructs</i>.....	60
References.....	61
Abstract.....	70

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: <i>Kinetic variables for HQS-Epoxy inhibition of $rTcdA^{540}$</i>	16
Table 2: <i>Primers for cloning $rTcdB$-WT and $rTcdB$-NVN</i>	36
Table 3: <i>Sequencing primers for $rTcdB$-WT</i>	40
Table 4: <i>Sequencing primers for $rTcdB$-NVN</i>	40

LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter One

Figure 1: <i>C. diff</i> pathogen and pseudomembranous colitis.....	1
Figure 2: Cycle of CDAD manifestation and recurrence.....	2
Figure 3: <i>Clostridium difficile</i> 's primary virulence factors.....	3
Figure 4: Mechanism of TcdA/B pathogenesis.....	4

Chapter Two

Figure 5: Structure and production pathway of the HQS-Epoxy peptide inhibitor.....	9
Figure 6: The coupled-enzyme assay simultaneously monitors glucosylhydrolase and glucosyltransferase activity conferred by of TcdA/B.....	11
Figure 7: k_{GH+GT} rate of rTcdA-WT as determined by the coupled-enzyme assay and visual occlusion of rTcdA-GTD at high pH.....	12
Figure 8: Structure and distinct enzymatic rates of rTcdA ⁵⁴⁰	13
Figure 9: rTcdA ⁵⁴⁰ glucosyltransferase rates for varying inhibitor concentrations over time.....	14
Figure 10: Visual cell protection against rTcdA in presence of HQS-Epoxy inhibitor.....	17

Chapter Three

Figure 11: Overview and key components of <i>C. diff</i> immune system activation pathways.....	25
Figure 12: Purity and activity of rTcdA-WT and rTcdA-NVN.....	26
Figure 13: Phase-contrast microscopy images of rTcdA-WT-treated HeLa cells.....	27
Figure 14: rTcdA-WT activates inflammasome and cytokine production <i>in vitro</i>	28
Figure 15: rTcdA-WT initiates cytokine production <i>in vivo</i>	29

Figure 16: Histology report of mice cecal sections in response to <i>C. diff</i> rTcdA.....	29
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Chapter Four

Figure 17: pHis1522 shuttle vector for <i>B. meg</i> expression system.....	34
Figure 18: Overview of rTcdB-WT cloning process.....	35
Figure 19: The <i>tcdB</i> gene was successfully isolated from <i>C. diff</i> genomic DNA.....	36
Figure 20: Double digest verification for pBMJ_130401.....	37
Figure 21: SDS-PAGE gel of purified rTcdB-WT and cytopathic rounding effects of active protein.....	38
Figure 22: Isolation and site-directed mutagenesis of rTcdB-GTD.....	38

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A₃₄₀: absorbance at 340 nm

AB3: Difco™ Antibiotic Medium 3

ACN: acetonitrile

amp: ampicillin

AmpR: ampicillin resistance gene

Anti/Anti: antibiotic/antimycotic

ATP: adenosine triphosphate

B. meg: *Bacillus megaterium*

BL2: Biosafety Level 2

BL21 DE3: strain of chemically competent *E. coli*

C. diff: *Clostridium difficile*

C-18: *n*-octadecane

cam: chloramphenicol

CDAD: *Clostridium difficile*-associated diseases

Cdc42: cell division control protein 42 homolog

CIP: calf intestinal alkaline phosphatase

CO₂: carbon dioxide

CPD: cysteine protease domain

CROP-RBD: C-terminal repetitive oligopeptide receptor binding domain

CXCL1: growth-related oncogene alpha or chemokine (C-X-C motif) ligand 1

D286: aspartate 286

DNA: deoxyribonucleic acid

dNTPs: deoxyribose nucleoside triphosphates

DTT: dithiothreitol

E: enzyme

E. coli: *Escherichia coli*

EDTA: ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid

EI: reversible enzyme/inhibitor complex

EI*: irreversible enzyme/inhibitor complex

ELISA: enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay

EMEM: Eagle's Minimum Essential Media

E_p:E*: final elutions pooled

eq.: equation

FBS: fetal bovine serum

FDA: Federal Drug Administration

FPLC: fast protein liquid chromatography

GH: glucosylhydrolase

GI: gastrointestinal

GT: glucosyltransferase

GTD: glucosyltransferase domain

GTPase: guanosine triphosphate hydrolase enzyme

HEPES-K: 4-(2-hydroxyethyl)-1-piperazineethanesulfonic acid with potassium
counterion

HIV: human immunodeficiency virus

HQS-Epoxy: inhibitor peptide with sequence NH₂-HQSPG_{epoxy}HHGGGC_{amide}-CONH₂

HQS-Parent: inhibitor peptide with sequence $\text{NH}_2\text{-HQSPG}_{\text{allyl}}\text{HHGGGC-CONH}_2$

HQS-Protected: inhibitor peptide sequence $\text{NH}_2\text{-HQSPG}_{\text{allyl}}\text{HHGGGC}_{\text{amide}}\text{-CONH}_2$

HQSPWHH: original inhibitor peptide identified by phage display

hTHP-1: human THP-1 monocytes

I: inhibitor

IBD: irritable bowel syndrome

IC₅₀: half-maximal inhibitory concentration

ICE: interleukin-1 converting enzyme or caspase 1

IL-1B: interleukin 1B

IL-6: interleukin 6

IL-23: interleukin 23

IP₆: inositol hexakisphosphate

IPTG: isopropyl β -D-1 thiogalactopyranoside

k₋₁: rate of dissociation of EI complex

k₊₁: rate of association of EI complex

k₂: rate constant of EI* formation

kb: kilobase

KCl: potassium chloride

kDa: kilodalton

k_{GH}: glucosylhydrolase enzymatic rate

k_{GH+GT}: combined rate of glucosylhydrolase and glucosyltransferase enzymatic activities

k_{GT}: glucosyltransferase enzymatic rate

K_I: inhibition constant or inhibitor binding affinity constant of EI complex

K_M: Michaelis-Menten constant

LB: lysogeny broth

LDH: lactate dehydrogenase

LPS: lipopolysaccharides

mBMDCs: murine bone marrow derived dendritic cells

mCPBA: meta-chloroperoxybenzoic acid

MgCl₂: magnesium chloride

mL: milliliter

mM: micromolar

MRSA: methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*

MWCO: molecular weight cut-off

PAMPs: pathogen-associated molecular patterns

pANK: plasmid by Amy N. Kerzmann

pBMJ: plasmid by Brianna M. Jackman

PBS: phosphate-buffered saline

pg: picogram

pNLA: plasmid by Natalie L. Anderson

(NH₄)₂CO₃: ammonium carbonate

N₂: liquid nitrogen

Na₂HPO₄: sodium phosphate

NaCl: sodium chloride

NADH: nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide

NADPH: nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide phosphate

NaOH: sodium hydroxide

NEB: New England Biolabs

NF- κ B: nuclear factor kappa-light-chain-enhancer of activated B cells

NH₄OH: ammonium hydroxide

N_i: quantity remaining after time t

NK Cells: natural killer cells

nm: nanometer

nM: nanomolar

N_o: initial quantity

OD₆₀₀: optical density at 600 nm

PaLoc: *C. diff* pathogenicity locus

PCR: polymerase chain reaction

PDB: Protein Data Bank

PEG-6000: polyethylene glycol 6000

PEP: phosphoenolpyruvate

***pfu*:** *Pyrococcus furiosus* DNA polymerase

PK: pyruvate kinase

PxylA': xylose isomerase gene promoter

Rac1: Ras-related C3 botulinum toxin substrate 1

RhoA: Ras homolog gene family member A

RhoA-Glc: glucosylated (inactive) RhoA

RLU: relative light units

RP-HPLC: reverse phase high performance liquid chromatography

rpm: rotations per minute

RT: room temperature

rTcdA⁵⁴⁰: toxin A truncate containing amino acids 1-540

rTcdA-WT: wild type recombinant *C. diff* toxin A

rTcdA-NVN: recombinant, inactive mutant of *C. diff* toxin A

rTcdB-WT: wild type recombinant *C. diff* toxin B

rTcdB-NVN: recombinant, inactive mutant of *C. diff* toxin B

RXN: reaction

S: RhoA substrate concentration

SDM: site-directed mutagenesis

SDS-PAGE: sodium dodecyl sulfate polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis

SEAP: secreted embryonic alkaline phosphatase

SF-EMEM: serum-free Eagle's Minimum Essential Media

t: specified time point

t_{1/2}: half-life or time at 50% decay of product

taq: *Thermus aquaticus* DNA polymerase

tcdA: gene encoding *C. diff* enterotoxin A

TcdA: *C. diff* enterotoxin A

tcdB: gene encoding *C. diff* enterotoxin B

TcdB: *C. diff* enterotoxin B

tcdC: gene encoding *C. diff* toxin C

tcdE: gene encoding *C. diff* toxin E

tcdR: gene encoding *C. diff* toxin R

TD: translocation domain

tet: tetracycline

TetR: tetracycline resistance gene

TFA: trifluoroacetic acid

TLR: toll-like receptor

TNF α : tumor necrosis factor alpha

Top10: strain of electrocompetent *E. coli*

TSS: transcription start site

U: units

UDP-Glc: uridine diphosphate glucose

ug: microgram

uL: microliter

um: micrometer

uM: micromolar

umol: micromoles

UV-VIS: ultraviolet-visible

V: volts

V_i: rate in presence of inhibitor

V_o: rate in absence of inhibitor

v/v: volume per volume ratio

w/v: weight per volume ratio

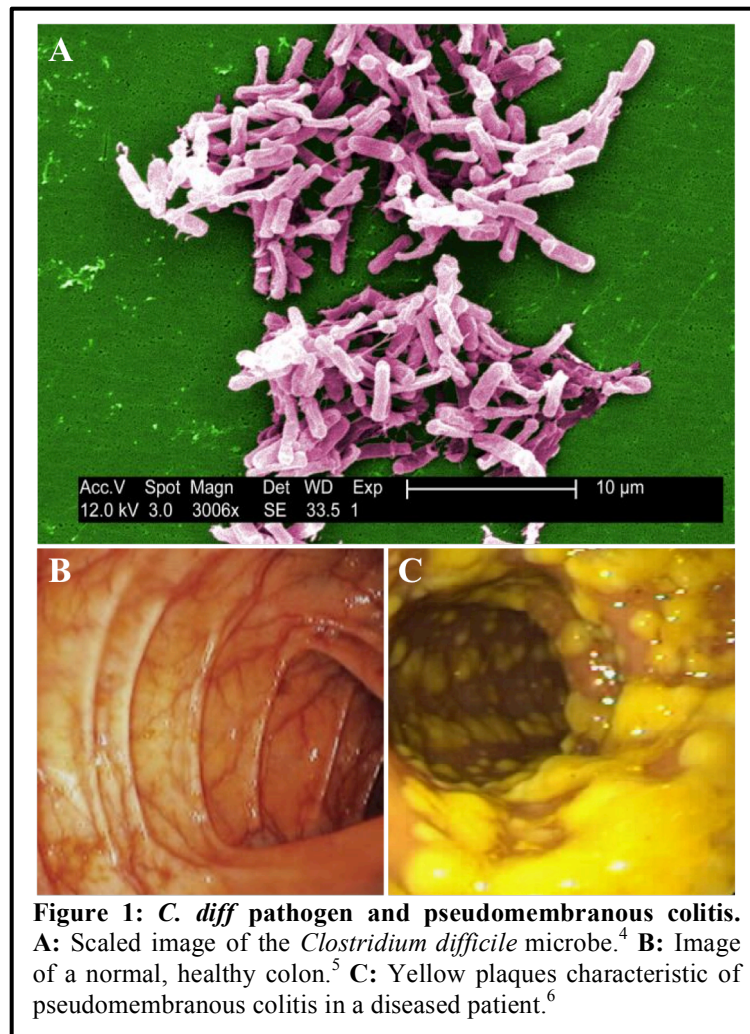
xylA': xylose isomerase gene

xylR: transcriptional regulatory repressor of xylose isomerase gene

CHAPTER ONE:

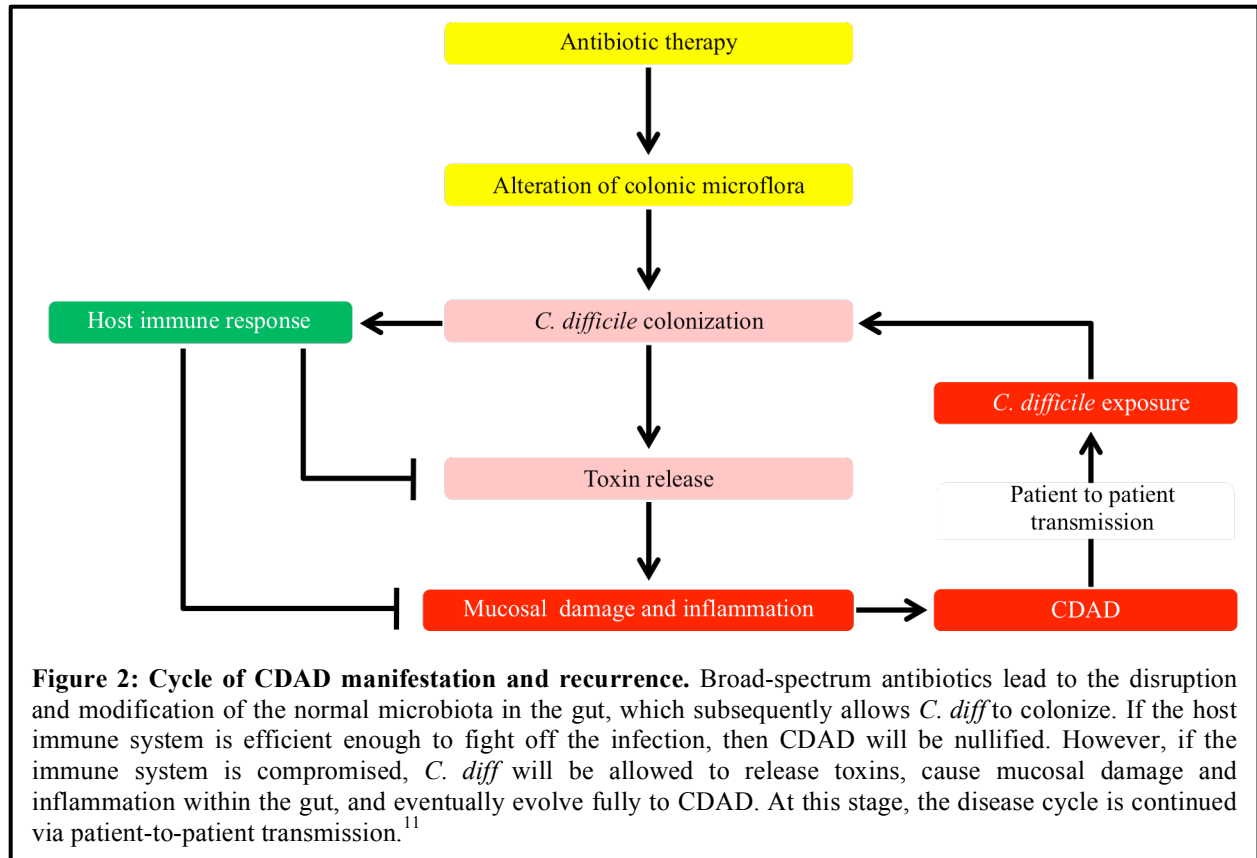
Introduction to the *Clostridium difficile* Pathogen and Associated Diseases

Clostridium difficile (*C. diff*, **Figure 1A**) is a Gram-positive, anaerobic pathogen known to form spores and give rise to hospital-acquired *C. diff*-associated diseases (CDAD).¹ Often, the infection is acquired by patient-to-patient transfer and subsequent ingestion of *C. diff* spores



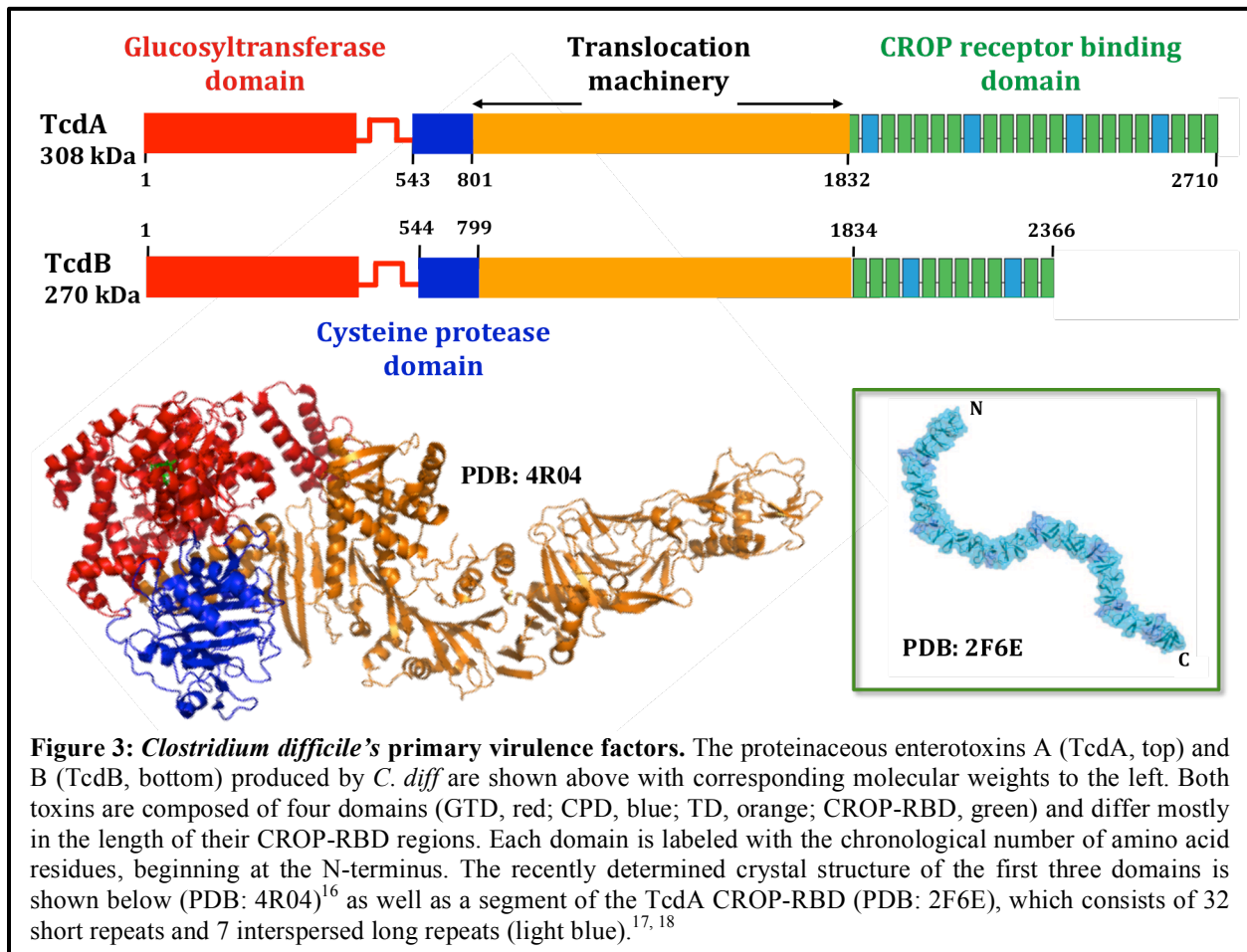
known to survive in the hospital setting.^{2,3} CDAD is characterized by a range of symptoms such as excessive diarrhea, colonic inflammation, septic shock, pseudomembranous colitis (**Figure 1C**) and in extreme cases, death.^{1,7} The cycle of CDAD manifestation and recurrence is outlined in **Figure 2**. Essentially, patient treatment with broad-spectrum antibiotics or chemotherapeutic agents⁸ disturbs the normal bacterial community within the colon, allowing *C. diff* to

colonize the gut and cause infection.⁷ Moreover, several antibiotic-resistant strains are continually emerging, only some of which have been characterized.^{9, 10} These resistant, hypervirulent strains, as well as the common production of environmentally-tolerant spores^{1,3,10} escalate relapse rates in previously treated patients.⁸ As a consequence of bacterial evolution,



prevalence and mortality rates associated with CDAD are actively increasing, with susceptibility relying not only on antibiotic consumption and hospitalization, but elderly individuals and those with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) or human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) are also especially vulnerable.¹² Roughly 500,000 Americans per year acquire CDAD, where 1 out of every 5 patients experience a recurrent infection, and nearly 30,000 of the overall infected patients die within only one month of disease onset.¹³ Notably, 80% of yearly deaths due to *C. diff* infection occurred among those aged 65 years and above.¹³ Furthermore, the number of CDAD victims has recently outgrown those infected with methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), causing CDAD-related medical expenses to reach \$4.8 billion in the United States per year.^{13, 14}

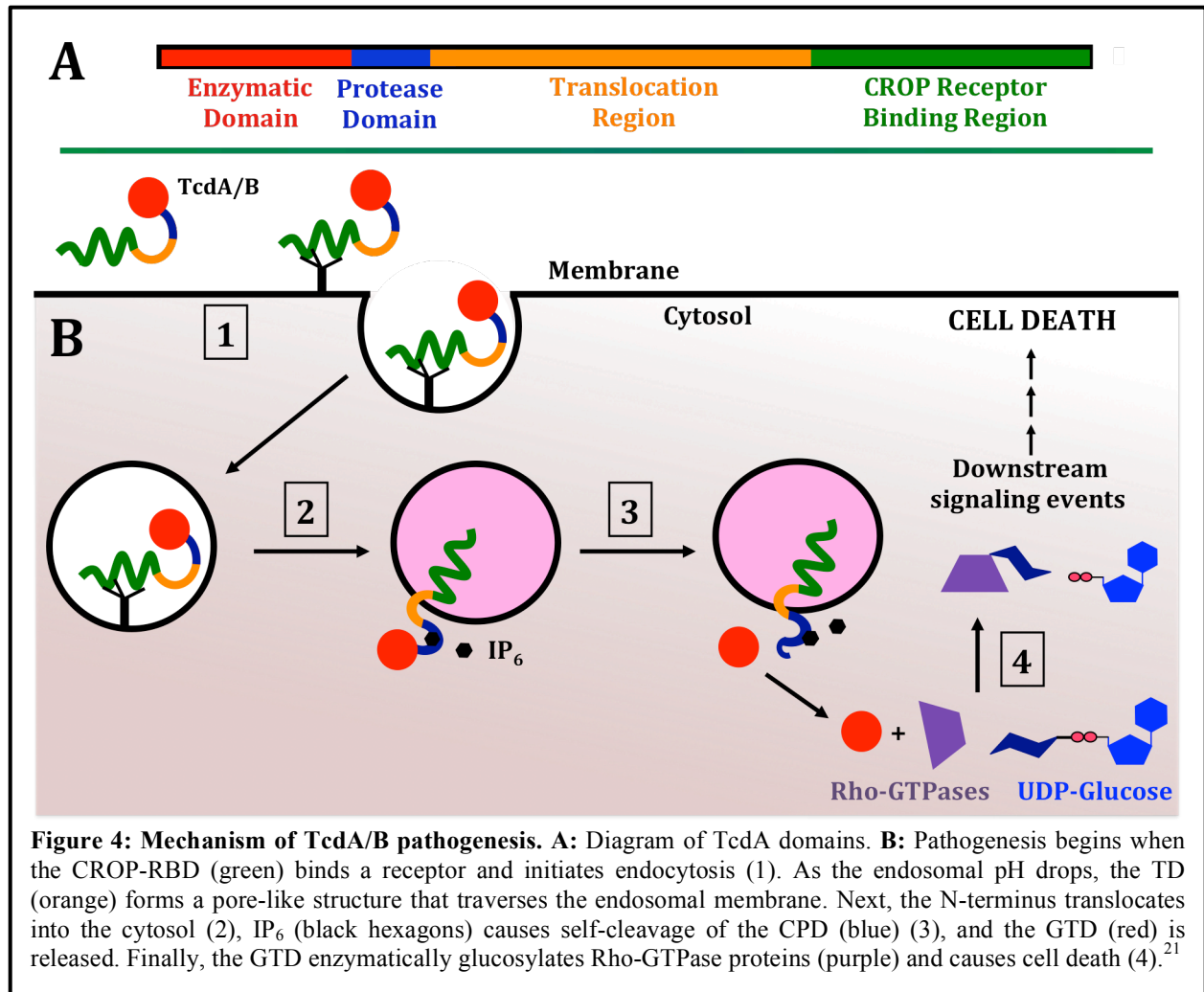
Enterotoxins A (TcdA) and B (TcdB), shown in **Figure 3**, are the main virulence factors produced by *C. diff*.¹⁰ Both TcdA/B are composed of four domains: an enzymatic glucosyltransferase domain (GTD), a cysteine protease domain (CPD), a central translocation domain (TD), and a receptor-binding region at the c-terminus, also known as the C-terminal repetitive oligopeptide receptor-binding domain (CROP-RBD).¹⁵ The *tcdA* and *tcdB* genes encoding Toxin A and B, respectively, are located within a 19.6 kb chromosomal region known



as the pathogenicity locus (PaLoc).¹⁹ Also present within the PaLoc is *tcdR* and *tcdC*, which are genes that code for a positive and a negative transcriptional regulator of toxin production, respectively, and *tcdE*, a holin-like protein necessary for secretion of the toxins into the

surrounding environment. These three additional PaLoc genes, although extremely important, are only a few of many factors involved in the regulatory networks of TcdA/B synthesis.¹⁹

Pathogenesis of TcdA/B is exceptionally fascinating; these holotoxins possess all necessary machinery required to infect and kill cells. The mechanism of action (**Figure 4**), although yet to be completely understood, proceeds by first utilizing the CROP-RBD to bind a glycan receptor present at the surface of colonic epithelium cells.²⁰ More specifically, the CROP



has portrayed specific binding affinity to glycan moieties ending in a Gal α 1,3Gal β 1,4GlcNAc sequence, where the α 1,3 linkage amidst the two galactose sugars is suggested to be of importance.²² Upon binding, receptor-mediated endocytosis is activated and results in an

endosome-encapsulated toxin.²³ The acidic environment, which is characteristic during endosomal maturation, then allows the TD to unfold, expose its hydrophobic residues, and insert into the endosomal membrane, forming a pore-like structure that acts as the pathway for endosomal release.^{20,24} Beginning at the N-terminus, the GTD and CPD are fed through the pore and into the cytosol.^{24, 25} The mechanism of endosomal insertion and release is still not completely known, but is believed to proceed in a way very similar to that of the anthrax toxin produced by *Bacillus anthracis*.²⁶ Upon entering the cytosol, the CPD binds native inositol hexakisphosphate (IP₆), which causes a conformational change allowing self-cleavage of the CPD and release of the enzymatic GTD.²⁴ The GTD is then free to exploit native UDP-glucose (UDP-Glc) as a substrate by hydrolyzing UDP-Glc and transferring the glucose moiety to threonine 37 of Rho GTPase family members (RhoA, Rac1, Cdc42) residing within intestinal epithelium cells.²⁷ Glycosylation of these small proteins (5-20 kDa) inactivates the enzymes catalytic GTP-ase behavior, resulting in loss of tight junctions between cells, loss of intestinal barrier function, cell death, and the characteristic symptoms of CDAD.⁸

The vigorous manifestation of *C. diff* and production of toxins also causes activation of the host immune system.^{28,29} As a first line of defense, the innate immune system generates non-specific immunity by producing small proteins, called cytokines, which lead to numerous downstream signaling events within the cell.³⁰ Cytokines, such as interleukins and chemokines, work together to identify and remove foreign matter by recruiting immune cells to the infection site, balancing humoral and cell-based immunity, and activating the adaptive immune system.^{30, 31} A compromised immune system in combination with existing *C. diff* infection is unfavorable and will likely progress illness within the patient, however an overactive immune system can also be destructive by initiating an excessive inflammatory response that may damage healthy

tissue. Therefore, although innate immunity is designed to fight off infection, when regarding *C. diff* and CDAD patients, in fact the system most often produces a detrimental amount of colonic inflammation that enhances disease progression.^{2, 32} Consequently, the problem and/or cure of CDAD becomes two-fold; both host and pathogen play a synergistic role in *C. diff* disease pathogenesis and progression.³² In other words, inhibition of bacterial colonization and toxic virulence factors, as well as down-regulation of harmful inflammation in response to *C. diff* bacterial components is needed to elicit an efficient therapeutic remedy.

A few of the current treatment methods to combat CDAD include antibiotic therapy, fecal transplantation, probiotics, and immunotherapy.^{1, 33, 34} Antibiotics, such as vancomycin and metronidazole, are usually the first course of action against the *C. diff* pathogen, however this approach has shown to have high recurrence rates and is also responsible for numerous resistant and hypervirulent strains.¹ Probiotics and fecal transplantation are both methods that attempt to reestablish the normal microflora within the gut, which is essential for diminishing *C. diff* and curing the patient. Although probiotic and fecal transplantation therapies have had some success, they both have downfalls as well. Probiotics, which are still considered to be controversial (not always FDA regulated), are not typically potent enough to cure the infection on their own and therefore are usually administered in conjunction with other treatments.^{33, 34} On the other hand, fecal transplantation has had many good outcomes, however it is known to have low patient compliance, moderate recurrence rates, and risk of transferring disease or other physiological traits (obesity, depression, etc.) to the patient.^{1, 34, 35, 36}

In attempt to sequester and fight off toxins, immunoglobulin and/or monoclonal antibodies have had variable outcomes, however these therapies are often administered at extremely high, sometimes toxic doses and again, usually in conjunction with other treatment

methods.^{1, 33, 34} It would be ideal to avert the disease altogether, however there has yet to be a preventative *C. diff* vaccine to pass clinical trials.¹ With all things considered, the current treatment options are ineffective and neglect to simultaneously target the bacterial pathogen and the inflammation-causing virulence factors that have already been produced. Moving forward, an effective therapeutic method that will inhibit all factors of CDAD is needed.

The specific goals of my thesis investigate GTD inhibition, host and pathogen contribution to immune system activation, and production of active rTcdB-WT. To begin, the first project deals with the development of an epoxide-containing peptide (HQS-Epoxy) as a novel, covalent inhibitor of the glucosyltransferase activity of *C. diff* toxins A and B (**Chapter 2**). Here, I aim to elucidate the rate of relative inhibition and crosslinking of the epoxide inhibitor to the GTD, the half-maximal inhibitory concentration (IC_{50}) of the peptide, and visual confirmation of cell protection against rTcdA-WT when inhibitor is present. Secondly, in regards to the host immune system, a collaboration was formed with Dr. William Petri's lab at the University of Virginia to elucidate the relationship between *C. diff* bacteria/toxin exposure and inflammasome activation within a murine host. **Chapter 3** details *in vitro* and *in vivo* activation of inflammation and cytokine production, as well as *in vivo* cellular damage, in response to active rTcdA-WT. Finally, since toxin B was not yet available in the Feig Lab, **Chapter 4** outlines the cloning, expression, and purification of rTcdB-WT and rTcdB-NVN (catalytically inactive mutant), as well as *in cellulo* confirmation of rTcdB-WT cytotoxicity. Together, these studies can facilitate characterization of CDAD as a whole, as well as distinguish the potential of our peptide inhibitors, and give further insight to prospective therapeutic methods.

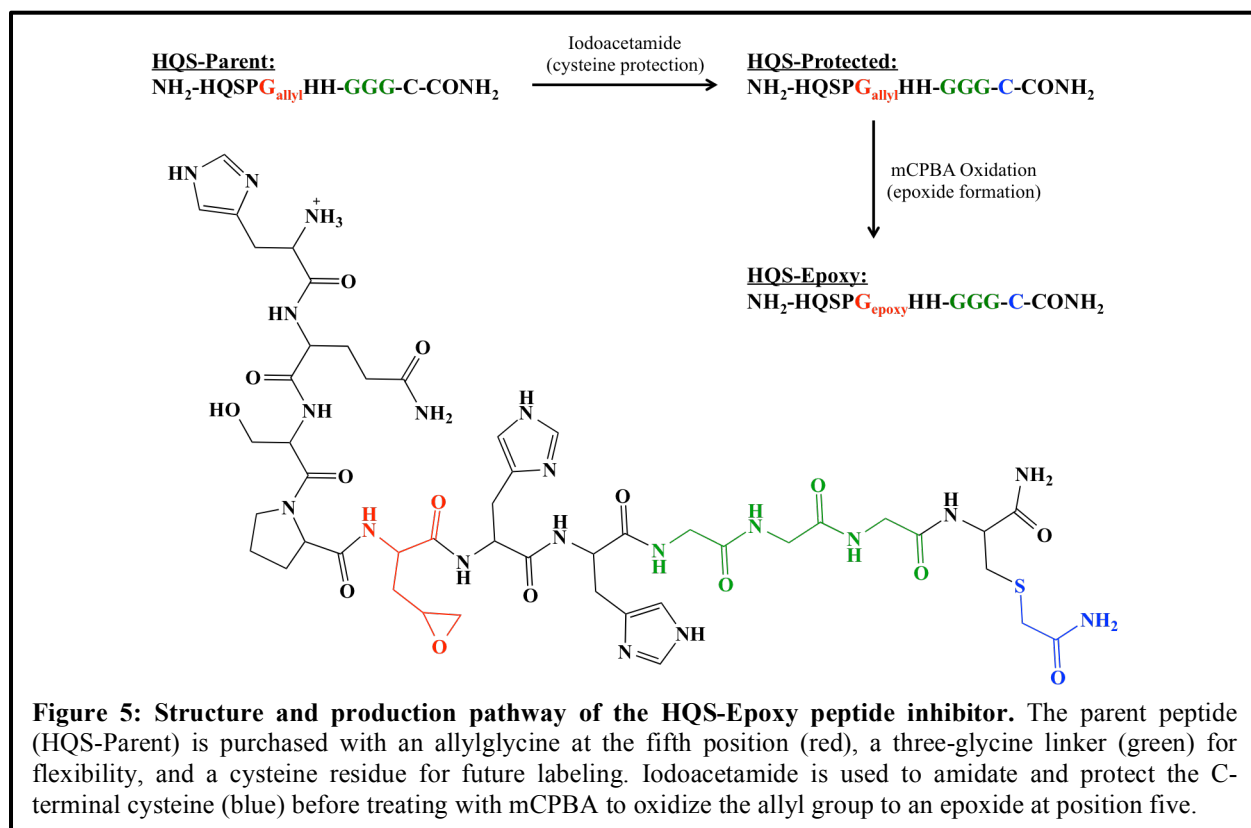
CHAPTER TWO:

Irreversible Inhibition of *Clostridium difficile* Toxin A Glucosyltransferase Activity via an Epoxide-Containing Peptide

As described in **Chapter 1**, both *C. diff* and the virulence factors TcdA/B are responsible for activating the host innate immune system, initiating a detrimental inflammatory response, and causing excessive damage to the colon.^{37, 38} Current treatment methods, most of which are antibiotics that target *C. diff*, are only modestly effective at curing CDAD. As a result, methods of targeting and inhibiting TcdA/B directly have become a topic of interest. Each of the four domains of TcdA/B (GTD, CPD, TD, and CROP-RBD) play separate and significant roles within the mechanism of infection, thus any of them can be targeted for inhibition.

With hopes of impeding initial CROP receptor-binding and entry of TcdA/B into host cells, Cherian, *et al.*, have recently engineered a cell line that stably expresses glycan derivatives which can be used to identify potential therapeutics by determining specific, high-affinity glycan receptor-binders.²² Studies have also identified specific regions within the TD that are imperative for endosomal release of the toxin³⁹ as well as molecules that disrupt pore formation and/or translocation across the membrane, either structurally or by inhibiting endosomal acidification, to culminate in an encapsulated toxin that is essentially nontoxic.^{40, 41} Furthermore, several molecules have been reported to inhibit autoprocessing/cleavage of the CPD, activate premature cleavage of the CPD (before entering host cell),^{42, 43, 44} and inhibit enzymatic activity of the GTD,^{41, 45, 46} and although numerous attempts to obstruct TcdA/B on a molecular level have revealed a better understanding of pathogenesis, none have led to a therapeutic antitoxin remedy that is effective towards curing CDAD in humans.

Interested by the inherent and newly discovered inflammatory damage to the colon that is the result of the GTD, the Feig Lab is currently investigating methods of TcdA/B



glucosyltransferase inhibition. Previously, Dr. Sanofar Abdeen used the phage display technique to identify a heptapeptide (HQSPWHH) which exhibited nanomolar binding affinity to the GTD of *C. diff* rTcdA.^{11, 46} Transitioning from phage to free peptide involved addition of a flexible glycine linker and a C-terminal cysteine for future labeling and binding purposes, resulting in the amino acid sequence HQSPWHHGGGC. As expected, this peptide displayed inhibition of glucosyltransferase activity *in vitro*, however further studies unexpectedly showed that it lacked the ability to protect against rTcdA *in cellulo*,¹¹ which was hypothesized to be the result of inhibitor dissociation during endosomal translocation.

To prevent dissociation and create a covalent connection between the inhibitor and the GTD active site, the tryptophan at position 5 was replaced with allylglycine (HQS-Parent) and subsequently modified to comprise a reactive epoxide moiety (HQS-Epoxy) with cross-linking ability.¹¹ The structure and derivatization process of HQS-Epoxy is depicted in **Figure 5**. Further

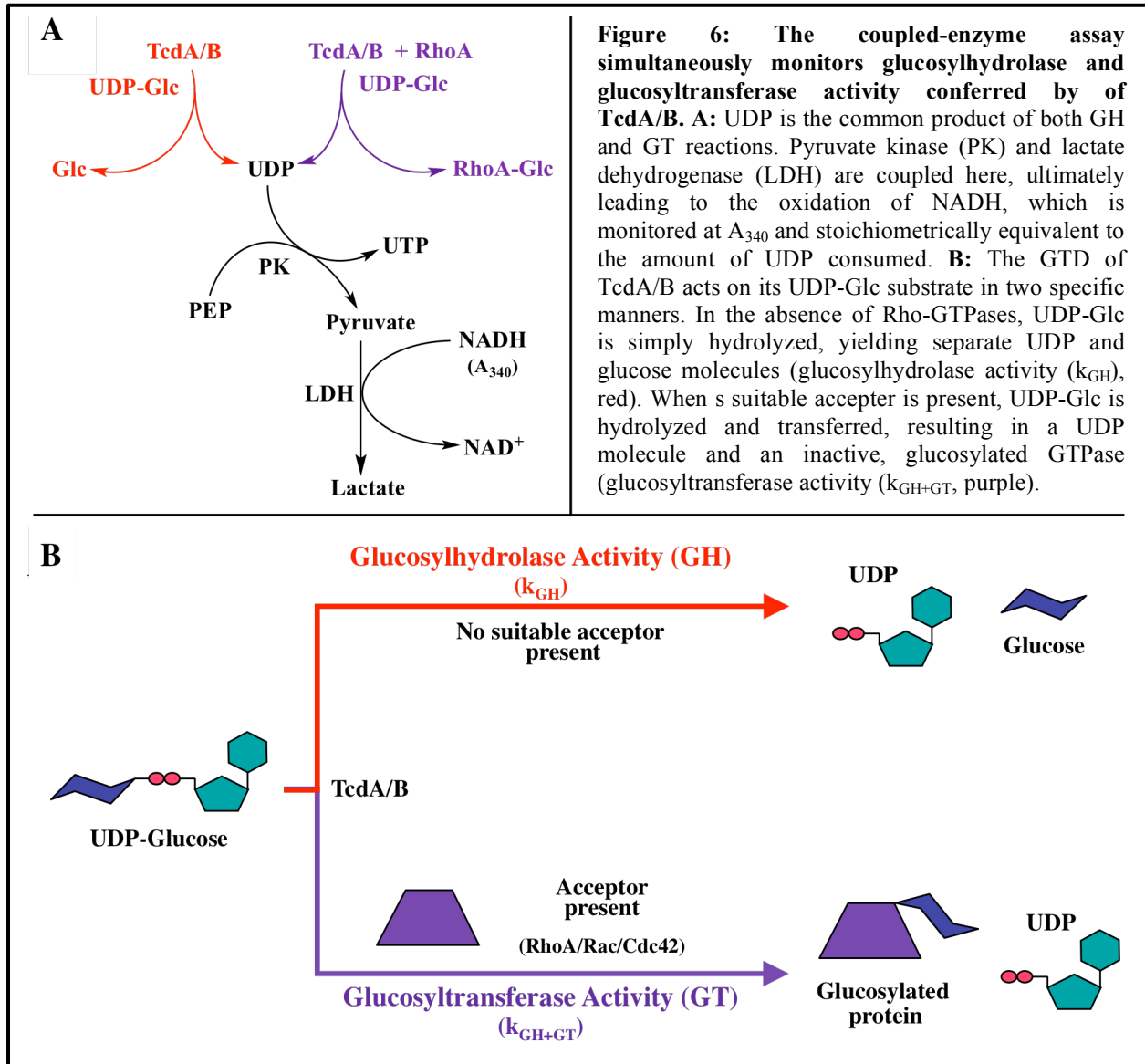
analysis of HQS-Epoxy determined that incorporation of the epoxide did indeed generate an irreversible inhibitor that was confirmed by mass spectrometry to cross-linked to the catalytic region of rTcdA-GTD^{11, 47} and after incubation of 30 minutes successfully protected against rTcdA *in cellulose*, demonstrating 95% cell protection at a concentration of 600 μM and a half-maximal inhibitory concentration (IC_{50}) of $\sim 100 \mu\text{M}$.^{11, 46} Kinetically, the binding of HQS-Epoxy to rTcdA is a two step process that combines reversible and irreversible inhibition as described in **equation 1**,



that is partially competitive to UDP-Glc and RhoA substrates, where the inhibitory binding affinity constant (K_i) for the reversible, loosely bound EI complex is defined as k_{-1}/k_{+1} and k_2 is the rate constant (i.e., cross-linking rate or rate of inactivation) corresponding to the tightly bound, covalent EI^* complex containing inactivated enzyme. Because of its potential to dissociate (k_{-1}), the initial EI complex formation is assumed to be a slower process than the subsequent time-dependent EI^* complex formation which is irreversible and results in a loss of active enzyme over time.

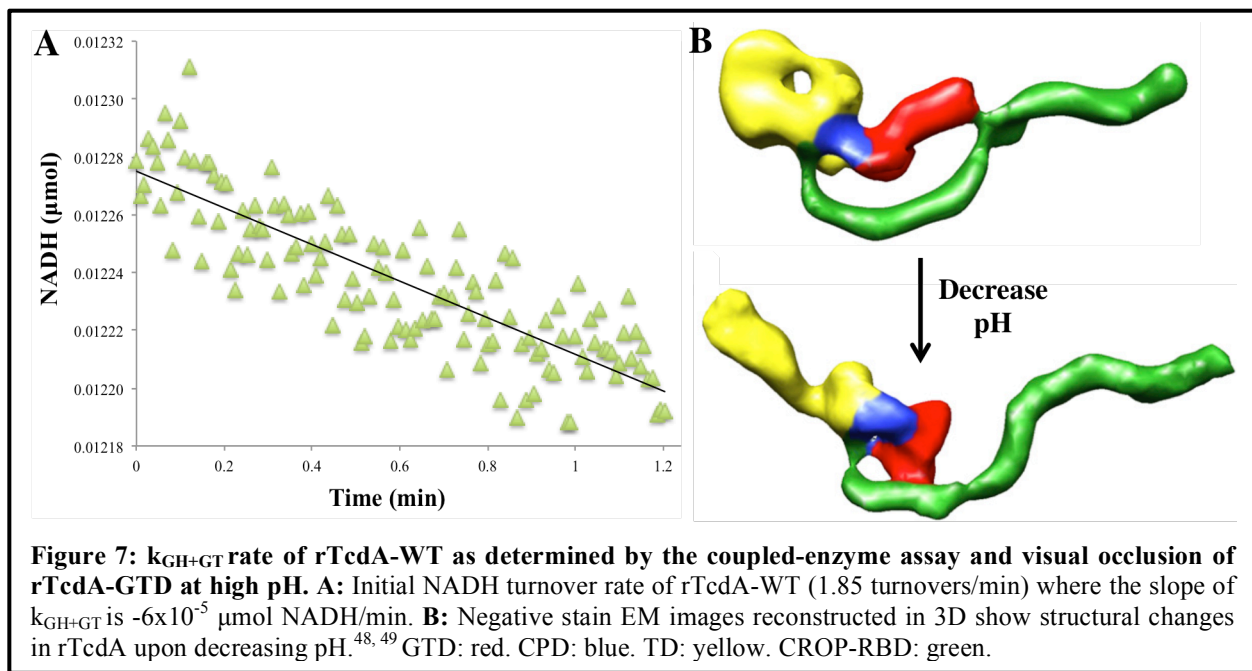
To further analyze these kinetic parameters and extent of glucosyltransferase inhibition generated by HQS-Epoxy, the optical coupled-enzyme assay displayed in **Figure 6A** was employed. With UDP being a common product of both GH and GT enzymatic reactions performed by rTcdA/B, this assay couples pyruvate kinase (PK) and lactate dehydrogenase (LDH) to allow for the simultaneous detection of the individual rates by monitoring the stoichiometric loss of NADH over time at an absorbance of 340 nm. **Figure 6B** depicts that

when RhoA or a suitable GTPase is present, TcdA/B exploits both GH and GT functionality and displays a rate that is the additive effect of both enzymatic reactions (k_{GH+GT}). However, when



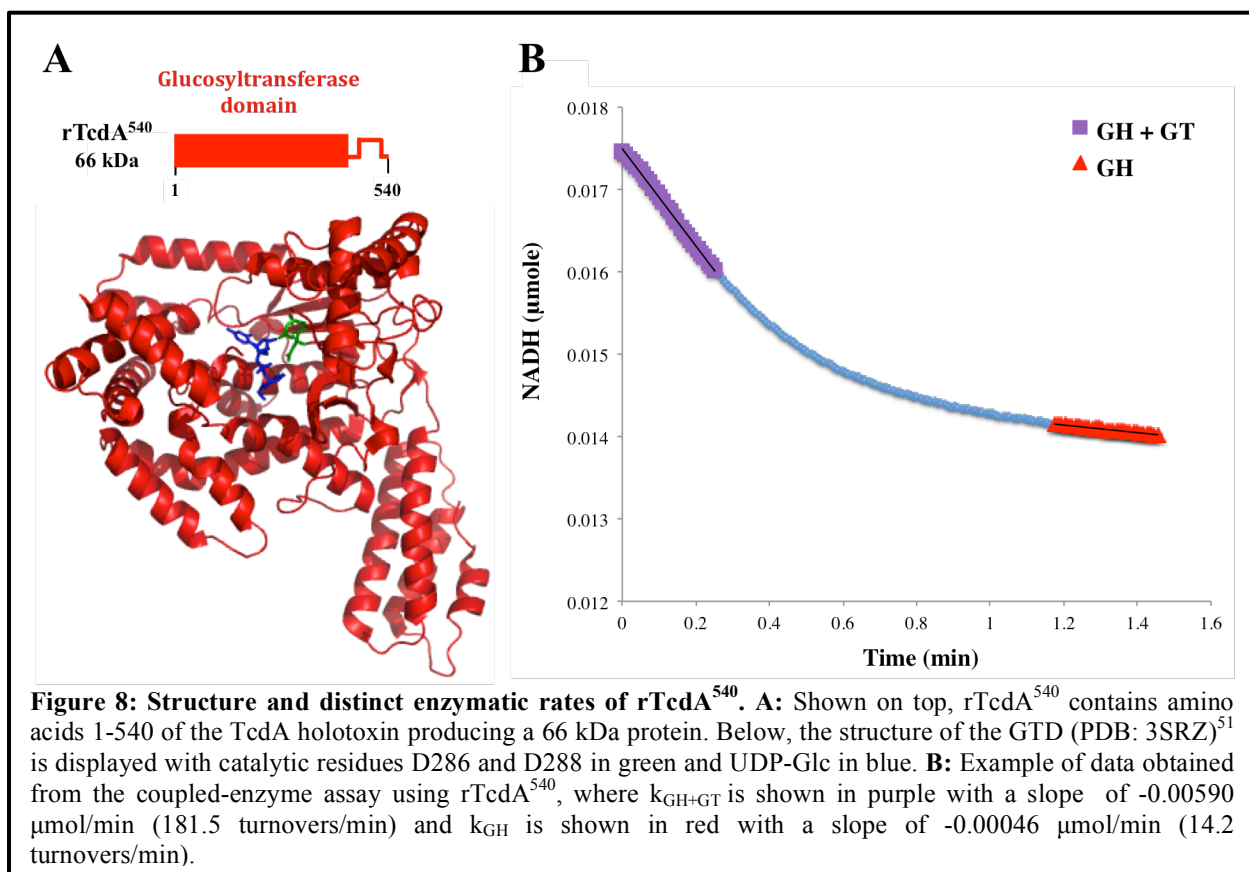
RhoA is not present or has been diminished, the resulting rate is that of the GH reaction (k_{GH}) alone, which can then be subtracted from k_{GH+GT} to determine k_{GT} . Pre-incubation of toxin with various concentrations of HQS-Epoxy inhibitor, and for specified times prior to assay initiation, was done to allow for a time-dependent analysis of GT inhibition and is discussed further below.

When using rTcdA-WT in the coupled-enzyme assay the slope of k_{GH+GT} was determined to be -6×10^{-5} $\mu\text{mol}/\text{min}$ (1.85 turnovers/min), as seen in **Figure 7A/B**, which is hypothesized to be the structural result of the holotoxin TD and CROP folding back and interacting with the GTD



and CPD in a manner that obstructs enzymatic activity prior to acidification and cleavage.^{16, 48, 49}

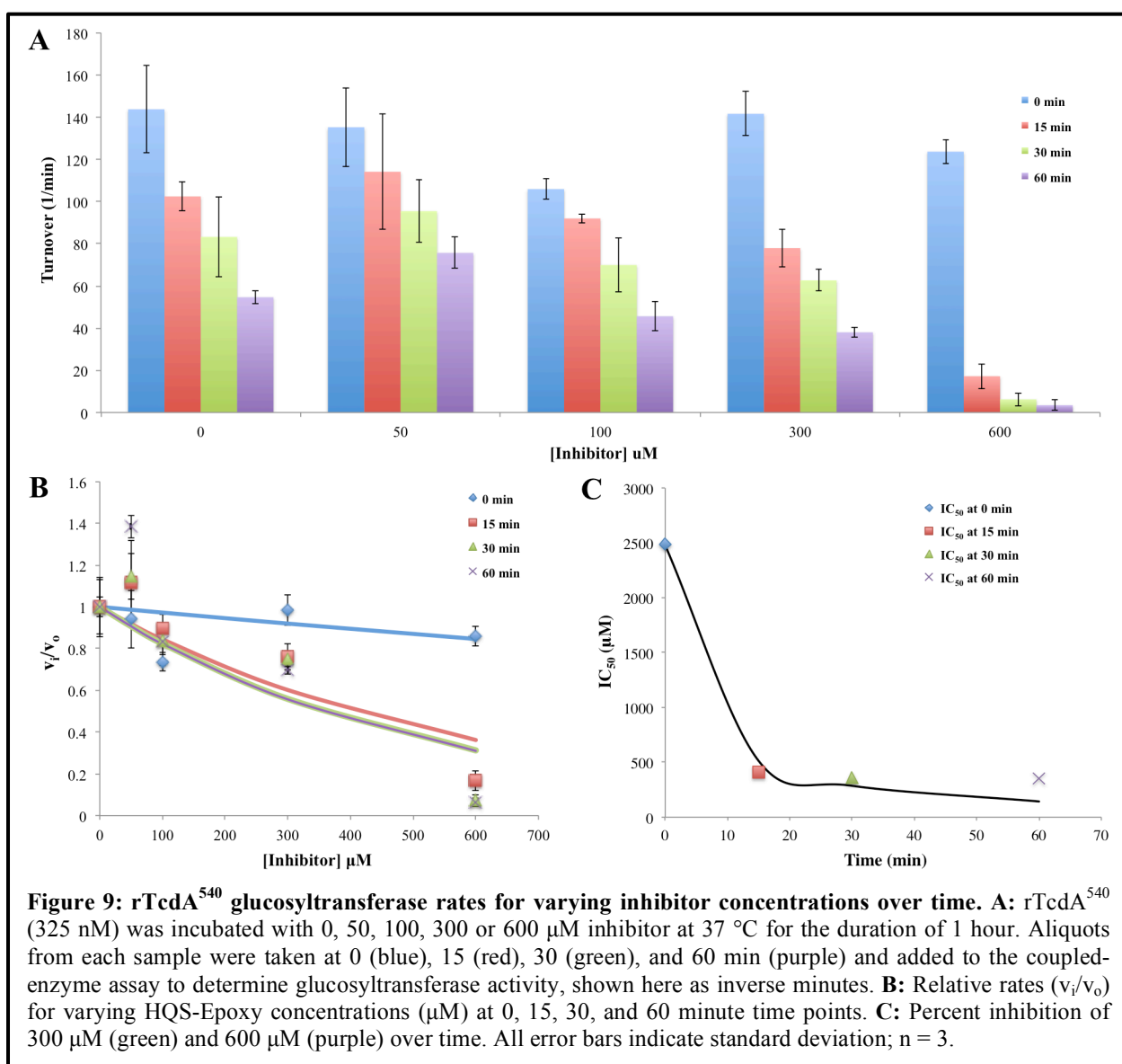
Incubation of rTcdA-WT with IP_6 has shown to induce cleavage and allow rTcdA-WT activity *in vitro*,⁴⁸ however this was not attempted for the coupled-enzyme assay to avoid adding another enzymatic rate to the equation. Instead, in order to successfully analyze the GH and GT rates of *C. diff* toxin A, the GTD was isolated as a truncated construct containing the first 540 amino acids of the holotoxin (rTcdA⁵⁴⁰, **Figure 8A**).^{50, 51} As opposed to rTcdA-WT, rTcdA⁵⁴⁰ is fully



active when used in the coupled-enzyme assay and gives distinct rates for GH and GT (**Figure 8B**), which have also been previously reported.¹¹

Although analysis of rTcdA inhibition via HQS-Epoxy was monitored *in cellulo*,^{11,46} the overall extent of inhibition, crosslinking rate (k_2), and additional kinetic parameters utilizing the coupled-enzyme assay and rTcdA⁵⁴⁰ needed further investigation. Since the GH rate is slow and minimally affected by HQS-Epoxy, an average GH rate of 15 ± 1 turnovers/min ($n = 4$) was determined for rTcdA⁵⁴⁰ in the absence of inhibitor (data not shown). Once observed k_{GH+GT} rates in the absence and presence of varying HQS-Epoxy concentrations were determined, the average GH rate of 15 ± 1 turnovers/min was subtracted to give the average initial GT turnover rates seen in **Figure 9A**. At time zero, the GT rate of rTcdA⁵⁴⁰ (~ 140 turnovers/min) showed little change regardless of inhibitor concentration, but continuous incubation of rTcdA⁵⁴⁰ with HQS-Epoxy at

37 °C resulted in decreasing GT activity over time, indicating that the crosslinking process is not occurring instantaneously and is in fact time-dependent. **Figure 9A** also shows that although rTcdA⁵⁴⁰ lost roughly 50% activity over the 60 minute time course in absence of inhibitor, there was nearly a 9.5 fold decrease in GT rate when in the presence of 600 μ M inhibitor for the same



time period. These data suggest that rTcdA⁵⁴⁰ loses enzymatic activity over the 60 minute time course when incubated at 37 °C. However, this effect is not the sole reason for the decrease in GT rate that is seen in presence of the inhibitor.

To account for loss of rTcdA⁵⁴⁰ activity over time, **Figure 9B** portrays the relative rate (v_i/v_o) as a function of the corresponding pre-incubation time where v_i is the GT rate in presence of inhibitor, v_o is the GT rate in absence of inhibitor, and v_i equals v_o when [inhibitor] = 0. Representation of the kinetic data in this manner visually clarifies that 600 μ M inhibitor results in roughly 95% inhibition, agreeing with previously reported *in cellulo* data.¹¹ **Figure 9B** also exhibits that nearly 100% of potential crosslinking occurs in less than 15 minutes as longer incubation times of 30 and 60 minutes did not confer additional inhibition, thus suggesting an upper limit of 1.3 min⁻¹ for the rate constant k_2 . Supplementary data at time points below 15 minutes are necessary to more accurately define the rate constant of the crosslinking event.

Nevertheless, IC₅₀ values for the specified pre-incubation times were obtained by fitting the data in **Figure 9B** to a generic half-life equation,

$$N_t = N_o \cdot \left(\frac{1}{2}\right)^{\frac{t}{t_{1/2}}} \quad (\text{eq. 2})$$

where N_t is the quantity remaining after time t , N_o is the initial quantity, and $t_{1/2}$ is the half-life. In this case however, when relative rates are plotted with inhibitor concentration on the x-axis, $t_{1/2}$ then becomes the inhibitor concentration at 50% of the initial quantity, also known as the half-maximal inhibitory concentration or IC₅₀. Following Krippendorff, *et. al.*,⁵² to determine K_i and k_2 variables, time-derived IC₅₀ values were then graphed against time (**Figure 9C**) and fit by non-linear least squares regression to **equation 3**,

$$IC_{50}(t) = K_I \left(1 + \frac{S}{K_M}\right) \cdot \left(\frac{2 - 2e^{-\eta IC_{50} \cdot k_2 \cdot t}}{\eta IC_{50} \cdot k_2 \cdot t} - 1\right) \quad \text{with} \quad (\text{eq. 3})$$

$$\eta IC_{50} = \frac{IC_{50}(t)}{K_I \left(1 + \frac{S}{K_M}\right) + IC_{50}(t)}$$

where $IC_{50}(t)$ is the half-maximal inhibitory concentration at time t , S is the substrate concentration (RhoA), and K_M is the Michaelis-Menten constant for RhoA.^{11,50} All variables used and/or derived from fitting the model **equations 2 and 3** can be seen in **Table 1**.

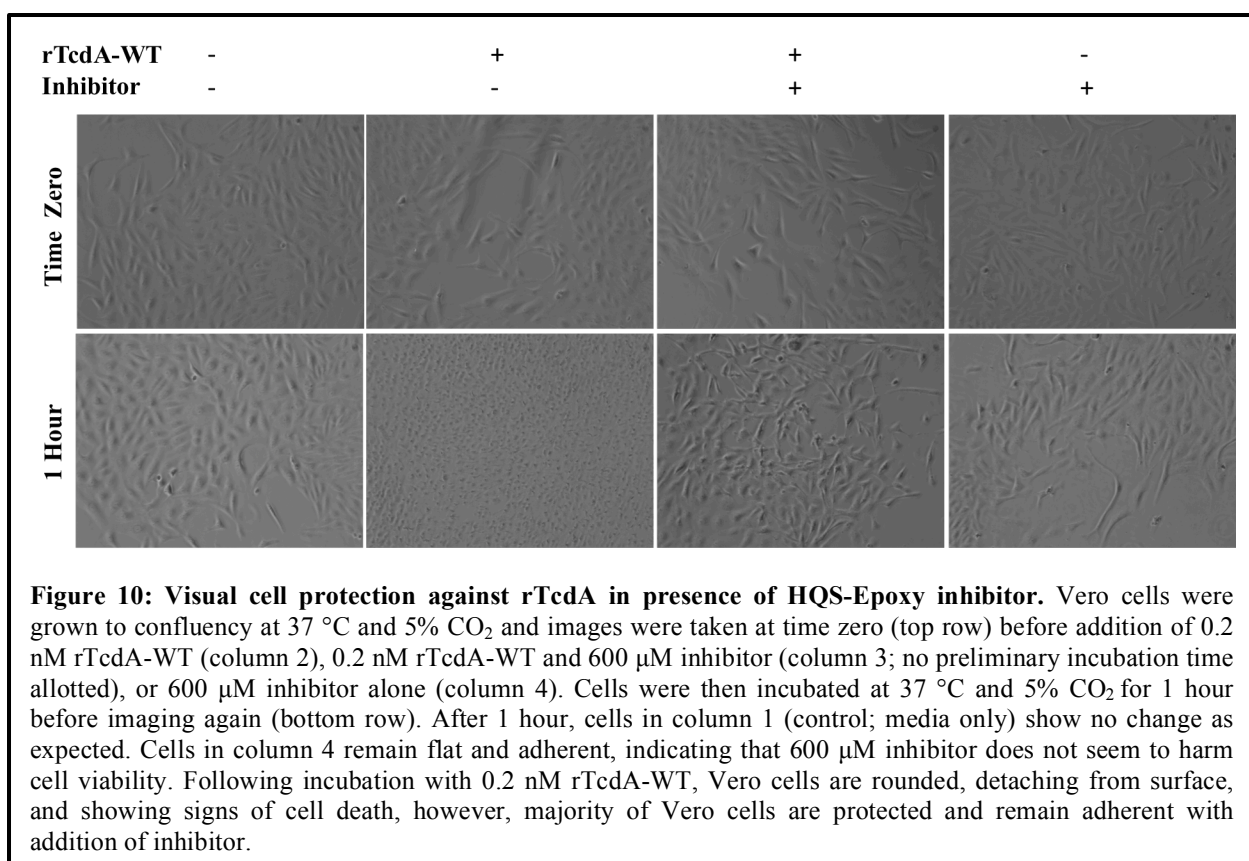
Table 1: Kinetic variables for HQS-Epoxy inhibition of *rTcdA*⁵⁴⁰.

Time-derived IC_{50} Values (μM)				S (μM) ^a	K_M (μM) ^b	K_I (μM)	k_2 (min^{-1})
0 min	15 min	30 min	60 min				
2487.7	409.4	357.6	355.2	50	300	1066.5	1.3

^aRhoA substrate concentration used in assays. ^bMichaelis-Menten constant for RhoA affinity to TcdA^{11,50}

In comparison to previously reported values,¹¹ the obtained K_I of $\sim 1100 \mu\text{M}$ is roughly 3.5 orders of magnitude larger than that found for HQS-Parent ($K_I = 300 \text{ nM}$) and one order larger than the IC_{50} ($100 \mu\text{M}$) of HQS-Epoxy.¹¹ An increase in the K_I value was expected due to decreased binding affinity of the modified peptide following addition of the epoxide moiety, however it is also important to note that these values were obtained using different experimental methods and fitting models. Furthermore, confirming that crosslinking was nearly complete by the 15 minute time point (**Figure 9B**), combined with the lack of GT data corresponding to critical time points below 15 minutes, the k_2 value was somewhat expected to be inaccurate. Presumably, the determined k_2 of 1.3 min^{-1} is seemingly slow, reflecting an upper limit of this value and indicating that EI* is formed at a constant rate of 1.3 crosslinking events per minute. Again, this data is unable to be published because time points below 15 minutes are necessary to accurately determine the values of K_I and k_2 .

To visualize if HQS-Epoxy confers cell protection against rTcdA at an incubation time point of zero, toxin and inhibitor were mixed and immediately subjected to Vero cells for 1 hour before imaging. Contrary to the GT kinetics reported above, **Figure 10** shows that even with zero pre-incubation time allotted for crosslinking, the majority of cells were alive and protected from the rounding effects of rTcdA, but in the absence of HQS-Epoxy, cells containing 0.2 nM rTcdA were severely disrupted and nearing death after only 1 hour. These data verify the fact that HQS-Epoxy crosslinks to the GTD in less than 15 minutes and most likely does so following CROP-receptor binding and endosomal acidification, as the TD and CROP interact with the GTD prior to these events,^{16,48,49} which was corroborated by the lack of activity for rTcdA-WT in the coupled-enzyme assay. Moreover, incubation of Vero cells with 600 μ M HQS-Epoxy alone determined that the epoxide-containing peptide inhibitor is in fact not toxic to cells and further validates its potential use as an antitoxin therapeutic.



The contrast of *in vitro* and *in cellulo* inhibitor effects at time zero are not extremely surprising, however; since the inhibitor peptide cannot bind rTcdA-WT before receptor binding and/or conformational change from endosomal acidification, there is an intrinsic delay in EI and EI* complex formation that may account for this phenomenon. Further, the pH dependence on crosslinking rate (k_2) has yet to be determined. It may initially be assumed that alkaline pH values will have an additive effect on k_2 by increasing the nucleophilicity of the amino acid that crosslinks to the active site,¹¹ but it can also be suggested that low pH may result in protonation of the epoxide moiety thereby increasing the electrophilic nature and enhancing k_2 as well. Future GT inhibition studies with varying pH will be useful in determining the pH-dependent effects on K_i and k_2 . Lastly, it is known¹¹ that HQS-Epoxy is somewhat competitive in respect to UDP-Glc and RhoA, the concentrations of which are higher than that of biological environments during the *in vitro* assay, and may also confer inhibition of HQS-Epoxy binding to some extent.

Future analysis of HQS-Epoxy *in vivo*, potentially within a mouse model, is needed to determine extent of inhibition, toxicity levels, stability of the peptide, and persistence of inhibitory impact when in a biological environment. Moreover, since HQS-Epoxy portrays a binding affinity and IC_{50} within the high μM range, a future reselection process to identify a mimicking peptide with nM affinity may be beneficial. Determining more accurate values for K_i and k_2 between 0 and 15 minutes, as well as the pH-dependence imposed on these variables, will also further characterize the epoxide-containing peptide and in doing so, these studies will help dictate the potential of HQS-Epoxy as a therapeutic agent to combat CDAD.

CHAPTER TWO METHODS

***B. meg* protoplast generation.** All procedures containing *B. meg* were carried out in a Biosafety Level 2 (BL2) lab following standard operating procedures. *B. meg* cells were grown overnight in 5 mL Difco™ Antibiotic Medium 3 (AB3) at 37 °C and 250 rpm. Fresh, warmed AB3 medium (50 mL) was then inoculated with 1 mL of overnight culture and incubated at 37 °C and 250 rpm until an A_{550} of 1.0 was reached. Cells were harvested (2000 rpm, 10 min, ambient temp), resuspended in 5 mL SMMP (1:1 AB3/SMM (40 mM maleic acid, 80 mM NaOH, 40 mM $MgCl_2$, 1 M sucrose)), and transferred to a 100 mL flask before adding 2 mg/mL lysozyme and incubating (37 °C, 100 rpm, 45-60 min). Again, cells were harvested (2250 rpm, 10 min, ambient temp), washed with 5 mL SMMP, and harvested once more as before. Finally, cells were resuspended in 5 mL SMMP (containing 10% (w/v) glycerol) and aliquoted before storing at -80 °C. Protoplasts were visualized by phase-contrast microscopy.

***B. meg* plasmid transformation.** *B. meg* protoplasts (200 μ L) were thawed and 0.5-1 μ g of *E. coli* miniprep-plasmid DNA was added, followed by addition of 600 μ L PEG-P (40% (w/v) PEG6000, 500 mM sucrose, 20 mM sodium maleinate, 20 mM $MgCl_2$, pH 6.5) solution was inverted to mix. Cells were incubated on ice and then at room temperature for 2 min each, followed by addition of 2 mL SMMP, gentle inversion, and harvesting (3000 rpm, 10 min, ambient temp). Supernatant was removed and 500 μ L fresh SMMP was added before outgrowing at 37 °C and 100 rpm for 90 min. Transformed culture was finally mixed with topagar, plated (LB agar plus 10 μ g/mL tetracycline (tet)), and incubated at 37 °C for 16 hours. Colonies were restreaked on tet plates to ensure selection.

***rTcdA/B* protein expression and purification.** *B. meg* cells containing the rTcdA/B plasmid were first grown overnight (37 °C, 250 rpm, 16-19 hours) in 10 mL LB containing 10

$\mu\text{g/mL}$ tet before inoculating 1 L LB flasks (10 $\mu\text{g/mL}$ tet) with the 10 mL overnight culture. Cells were then grown to OD_{600} of 0.4, induced by addition of 0.5% D-xylose, and incubated to OD_{600} of 1.5. Cells were harvested (8500g, 10 min, 4 °C) and stored at -80 °C until use. Thawed cell pellets (1-2 L) containing lysis buffer (50 mM Na_2HPO_4 , 300 mM NaCl, 10 mM imidazole, pH 8) and protease inhibitors were lysed by sonication (5 cycles at 37% power) and centrifuged to clarify (15,000 rpm, 45 min, 4 °C). Supernatant was filtered through 0.8 μm and 0.22 μm syringe filters, respectively, before removing from BL2 constraint. Crude lysate was purified first via nickel affinity column chromatography, followed by size exclusion column chromatography and a second affinity column to concentrate the protein. Affinity columns were washed with increasing concentrations of imidazole and elution was achieved with 250 mM imidazole. Lysates were filtered through 0.22 μm filters after each chromatography step and preceding dialysis (10,000 MWCO) into storage buffer (50 mM HEPES-K, 100 mM KCl, 1 mM MgCl_2 , pH 7.5).

rTcdA⁵⁴⁰ protein expression and purification. BL21 DE3 *E. coli* cells containing the rTcdA⁵⁴⁰ plasmid (pNLA 20405;⁵⁰ transformed via electroporation) were first grown overnight (37 °C, 250 rpm, 16-19 hours) in 10 mL LB containing 10 $\mu\text{g/mL}$ amp and 34 $\mu\text{g/mL}$ cam before inoculating 1 L LB flasks (10 $\mu\text{g/mL}$ amp and 34 $\mu\text{g/mL}$ cam) with the 10 mL overnight culture. Cells were then grown to OD_{600} of 0.4-0.6, induced by addition of 1 mM IPTG, and expressed 4-5 hours. Cells were harvested (5500g, 10 min, 4 °C) and stored at -80 °C until use. Thawed cell pellets (1-3 L) containing lysis buffer (50 mM Na_2HPO_4 , 300 mM NaCl, 10 mM imidazole, pH 8) and protease inhibitors were lysed by sonication (5 cycles at 37% power) and centrifuged to clarify (10,000 rpm, 45-60 min, 4 °C). Supernatant was filtered through 0.8 μm and 0.45 μm syringe filters, respectively, before removing from BL2 constraint. Crude lysate was purified

first via nickel affinity column chromatography, followed by size exclusion column chromatography and a second affinity column to concentrate the protein. Affinity columns were washed with increasing concentrations of imidazole and elution was achieved with 250 mM imidazole. Lysates were filtered through 0.22 μ m syringe filters after each chromatography step and preceding dialysis (10,000 MWCO) into storage buffer (50 mM HEPES-K, 100 mM KCl, 1 mM MgCl₂, pH 7.5).

RhoA GTPase expression and purification. Rosetta 2 (DE3) *E. coli* cells containing the RhoA-v4 plasmid (pNLA 20504;⁵⁰ transformed via electroporation) were first grown overnight (37 °C, 250 rpm, 16-19 hours) in 10 mL LB containing 30 μ g/mL kan and 34 μ g/mL cam before inoculating 1 L LB flasks (30 μ g/mL kan and 34 μ g/mL cam) with the 10 mL overnight culture. Cells were then grown to OD₆₀₀ of 0.4-0.6, induced by addition of 1 mM IPTG, and expressed 4-5 hours. Cells were harvested (5500g, 10 min, 4 °C) and stored at -80 °C until use. Thawed cell pellets (1-3 L) containing lysis buffer (50 mM HEPES, 300 mM NaCl, 1 mM MgCl₂, pH 8) and protease inhibitors were lysed by sonication (5 cycles at 37% power) and centrifuged to clarify (10,000 rpm, 45-60 min, 4 °C). Supernatant was filtered through 0.8 μ m and 0.2 μ m syringe filters, respectively. Crude lysate was purified via nickel affinity column chromatography, washed with increasing concentrations of imidazole, and eluted with 150 mM imidazole. Lysates were filtered through a 0.22 μ m syringe filter preceding dialysis (3500 MWCO) into storage buffer (50 mM HEPES-K, 100 mM KCl, 1 mM MgCl₂, pH 7.5). Protein was concentrated (3500 MWCO) if necessary.

Optical coupled-enzyme assay. Reactions contained 50 μ M RhoA, 0.5 mM UDP-Glucose, 35 units/mL pyruvate kinase, 75 units/mL lactate dehydrogenase, 1 mM PEP, and 0.2 mM NADH in storage buffer (50 mM HEPES-K, 100 mM KCl, 1 mM MgCl₂, pH 7.5). Toxin

(rTcdA⁵⁴⁰ or rTcdA-WT) at concentrations ranging from 32.5-325 nM, with or without inhibitor present, was added to initiate the reaction (100 μ L final volume) at 0, 15, 30 and 60 min time points, and the decline of A_{340} was monitored using an Agilent 8453 UV-VIS spectrophotometer equipped with a circulating water bath set to 37 °C. For inhibition studies, 50, 100, 300, or 600 μ M HQS-Epoxy inhibitor peptide was used. Reactions were incubated at 37 °C over the duration of the experiment.

HQSPG_{allyl}HHGGGC-NH₂ peptide protection, epoxidation and purification.¹¹

HQSPG_{allyl}HHGGGC-NH₂ (HQS-Parent) was purchased from American Peptide, resuspended to a final concentration of 1 mg/mL in 20% ACN/H₂O, and purified by reverse-phase high-performance liquid chromatography (RP-HPLC) using a semi-preparative C-18 column (5-65% linear gradient of 0.1% TFA/ACN, flow 1.00 ml/min). Peptide fractions were collected, flash-froze via liquid nitrogen, and lyophilized overnight. A 1:1 molar ratio of dried HQS-Parent peptide and DTT was dissolved in 0.1 M (NH₄)₂CO₃ buffer pH 8, flushed with N₂ and incubated at 54 °C for 30 min. Next, solid iodoacetamide was added in 10-fold molar excess. Reaction was kept under N₂ in the dark, with continuous stirring for 2 hours, and then purified by RP-HPLC and lyophilized as above. Keeping under N₂, dried HQS-Protected peptide and 10-fold molar excess *m*-chloroperoxybenzoic acid (mCPBA) was added to a stirred solution of 2:1 CH₂Cl₂:0.01 M Na₂HPO₄/NaH₂PO₄ buffer pH 8, and incubated at room temperature with continuous stirring for at least 5 hours. Reaction progress was monitored by thin-layer chromatography (mobile phase 7:2:1 NH₄OH: H₂O: 2-propanol). Peptide was precipitated and washed 6 times by addition of diethyl ether to the aqueous layer. Peptide was then lyophilized, redissolved in water, and desalted by addition of ACN (50% v/v), centrifugation (4 °C, 10,000g, 10 min), and removal of supernatant from salt pellet. Again, peptide was purified as above, lyophilized, and stored at -20

°C until use. Mass spectrometry after each step determined presence of peptide.

Vero cell cultures. All procedures containing Vero cells were carried out in a Biosafety Level 2 (BL2) lab following standard operating procedures. Vero cell glycerol stocks were removed from -80 °C and quickly (less than 1 min) warmed to 37 °C in a water bath. Cells were suspended in 6 mL warm Eagle's Minimum Essential Media (EMEM) enriched with 10% fetal bovine serum (FBS) and 1% Antibiotic-Antimycotic (Anti-Anti) and spun down (200g, 5 min, ambient temp). Media was removed from pellet and cells were resuspended in 3 mL fresh media, which was plated in a 25 mL culture flask and incubated at 37 °C and 5 % CO₂. Once grown to roughly 80% confluency, adherent cells were passaged and regenerated as followed: EMEM was removed and 0.5 mg/mL trypsin was added before incubating the flasks at 37 °C and 5% CO₂ for 3 minutes or less. Trypsinized cells were then diluted 3X with EMEM, harvested (200g, 5 min, ambient temp), resuspended with 5 mL EMEM and new culture flasks were seeded with 50 µL resuspended cells and 3 mL fresh EMEM before incubating as before. Newly plated cells from glycerol stocks underwent a minimum of three passages before being used in any experiments.

Visual cell protection assay. Vero cells were seeded in a clear, 12-well plate in 500 µL Eagle's Minimum Essential Media (EMEM) enriched with 10% fetal bovine serum (FBS) and 1% Antibiotic-Antimycotic (Anti-Anti), incubated at 37 °C and 5 % CO₂, and grown to roughly 80% confluency. Wells were imaged using a Nikon Eclipse TS100 (Nikon Intensilight C-HGFI) and washed twice with 1 mL serum-free EMEM (SF-EMEM supplemented with 1% Anti-Anti) before adding either SF-EMEM alone, 0.2 nM rTcdA-WT, 0.2 nM rTcdA-WT plus 600 µM HQS-Epoxy peptide inhibitor, or 600 µM HQS-Epoxy peptide inhibitor topped off with SF-EMEM to a final volume of 500 µL. Cells were then incubated (37 °C, 5 % CO₂) for 1 hour before imaging again.

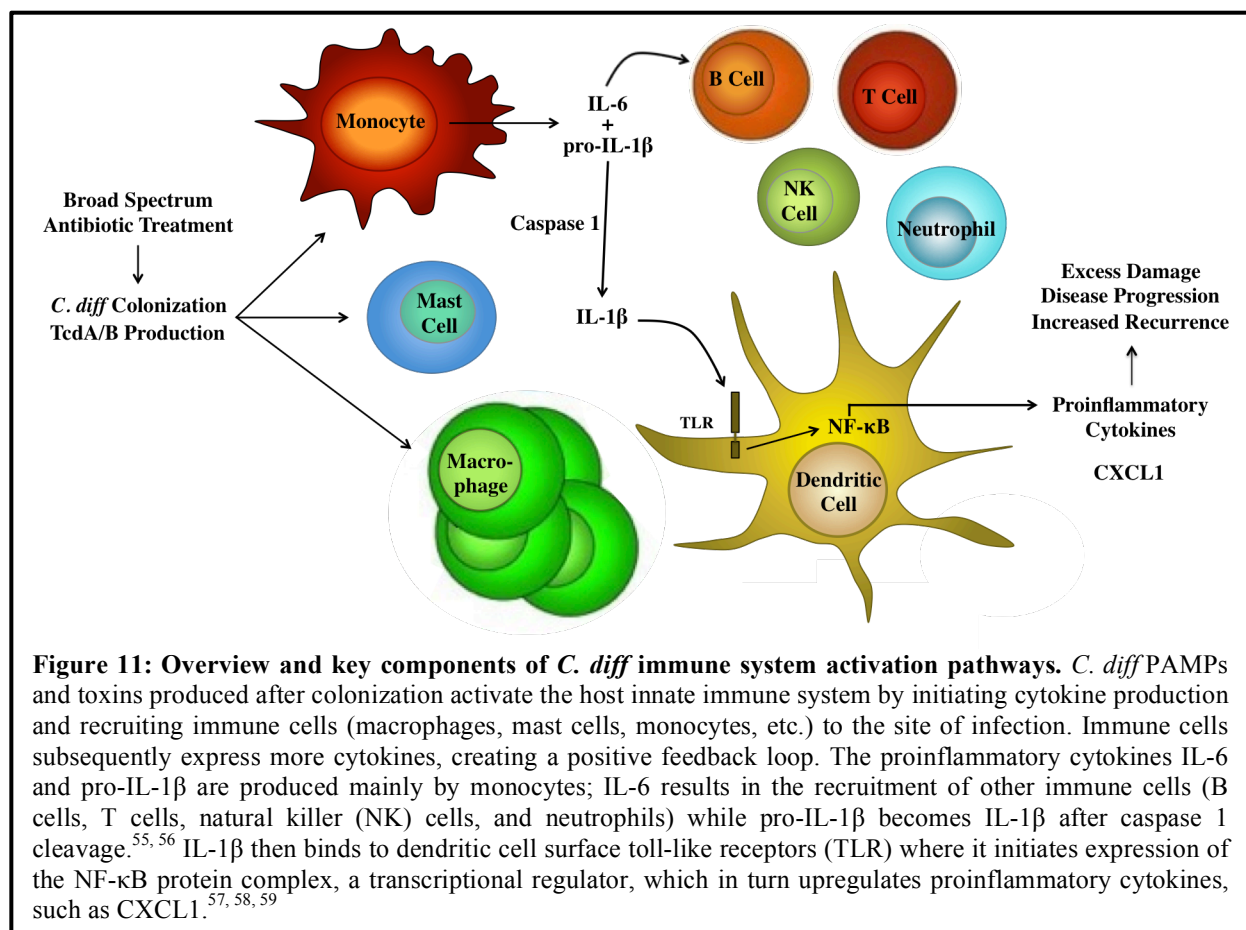
CHAPTER THREE:

Glucosylation Drives the Innate Inflammatory Response to *Clostridium difficile* Toxin A³⁸

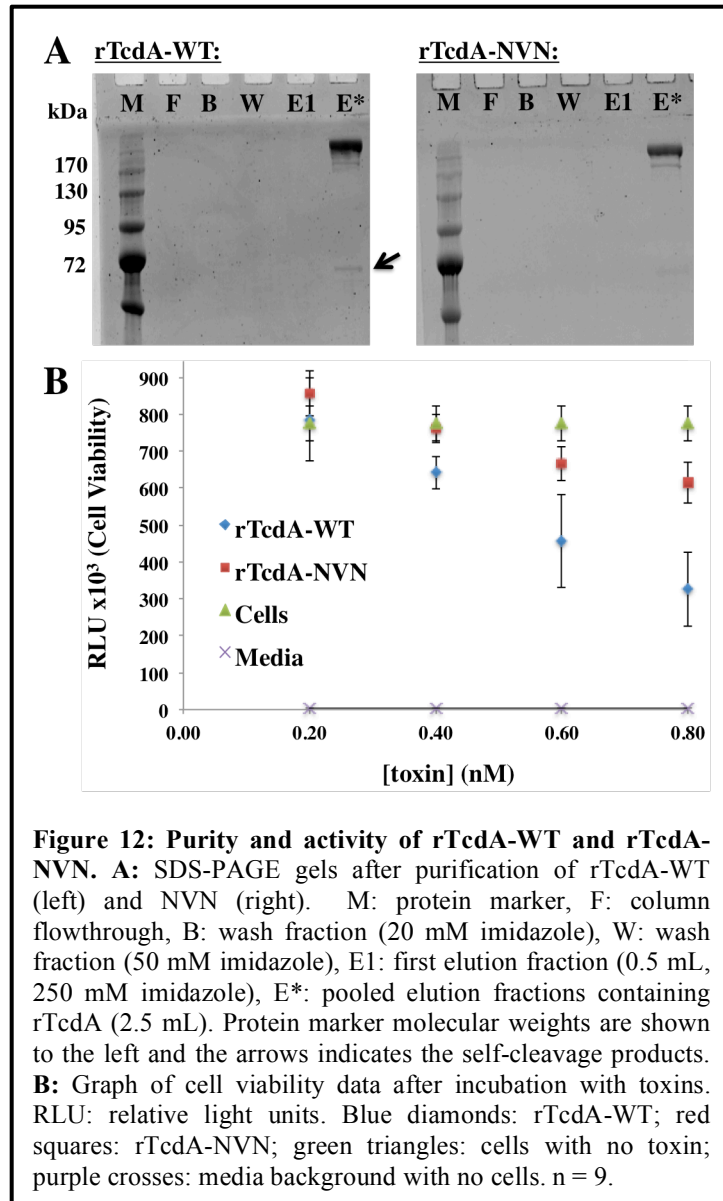
In effort to further understand the role of immune system activation in CDAD, the Feig Lab collaborated with the Petri Lab in the Immunology Department at the University of Virginia. The Petri Lab has recently reported evidence of elevated levels of specific proinflammatory cytokines (IL-23 and IL-1 β) that enhance disease progression in specimens positive for *C. diff* infection.^{37, 53} Furthermore, Cowardin, *et al.*, allude to the fact that activation of a robust inflammatory response is the result of not only *C. diff* toxins, but also the presence of a necessary precursor, or “priming” signal, brought on by bacterial components known as pathogen-associated molecular patterns (PAMPs).³⁷ Since part one of my thesis project deals solely with inhibition of GTD, the recent discoveries from the Petri Lab are of particular interest to me, not to mention the fact that they have access to mouse models. Moreover, the experiments in the Petri Lab, until now, were done with naturally isolated *C. diff* toxins, but that precludes the use of modified and mutant toxins, which provide a more granular probe of toxin activity. With the Feig Lab’s background in biochemistry, the Petri Lab’s knowledge of immunology, and the common interest of CDAD, a collaborative partnership was formed. Goals of this collaboration included further mechanistic understanding of inflammasome activation upon *C. diff* exposure, specific pathways involved in inflammation upregulation, and specific players associated with these pathways, which can be seen in **Figure 11**.

A previous lab member, Dr. Amy Kerzmann, genetically modified wild type rTcdA by site-directed mutagenesis to produce an enzymatically-inactive mutant, named rTcdA-NVN, with commonly known D285N and D287N mutations.^{50, 54} To begin collaboration with Carrie Cowardin in the Petri Lab, expression plasmids containing these genes (rTcdA-WT,

pANK_80406; rTcdA-NVN, pANK_80407) were transformed into *Bacillus megaterium* (*B. meg*), expressed, and purified before shipping to the University of Virginia. Final SDS-PAGE gels depicting the purity of these proteins are shown in **Figure 12A**. The final elution fraction (E*) containing the toxins also shows the presence of a protein band just below rTcdA that was unable to be resolved and separated with the size-exclusion column in our lab due to very similar molecular weights. Also existing in the E* lane is a band below 72 kDa, which was previously identified by mass spectrometry¹¹ to be the 63 kDa GTD that is produced by self-cleavage of rTcdA at the CPD. The higher molecular weight positioning on the gel is most likely due to different charge distribution within the molecules. Although not yet tested by mass spectrometry, it would seem apparent then that the small band above 170 kDa and below rTcdA is likely rTcdA with the loss of GTD (roughly 245 kDa) after self-cleavage.

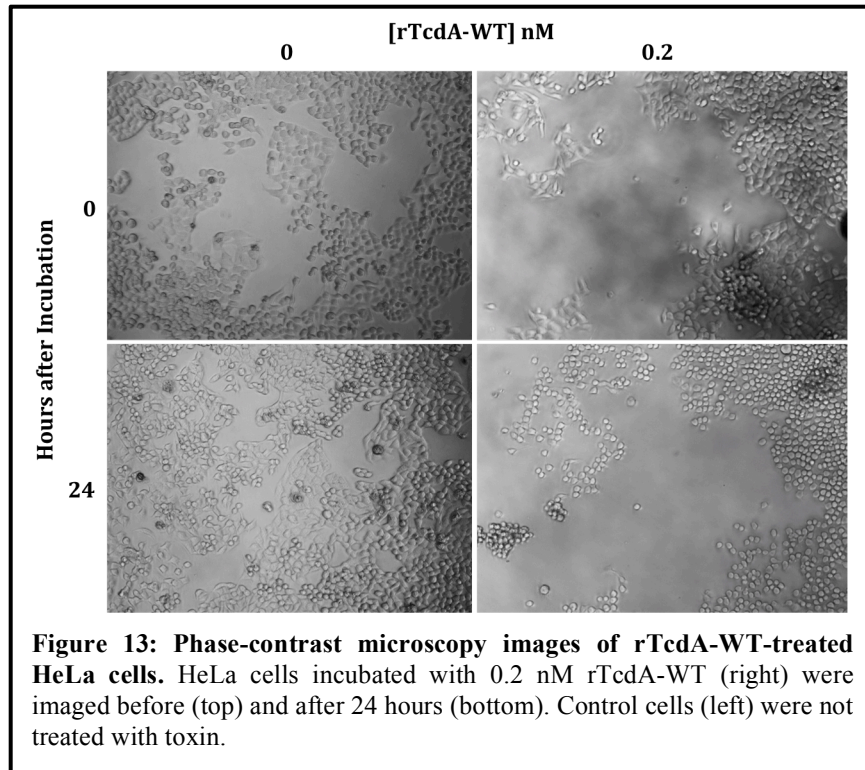


rTcdA-WT and NVN mutant were assayed for activity by the CellTiter-Glo® Luminescent Cell Viability Assay.⁶⁰ Data in **Figure 12B** shows decreasing ATP concentrations (shown as relative light units; RLU) in the presence of increasing rTcdA-WT, indicating functional glucosyltransferase activity and loss of cell viability, where the cell population was



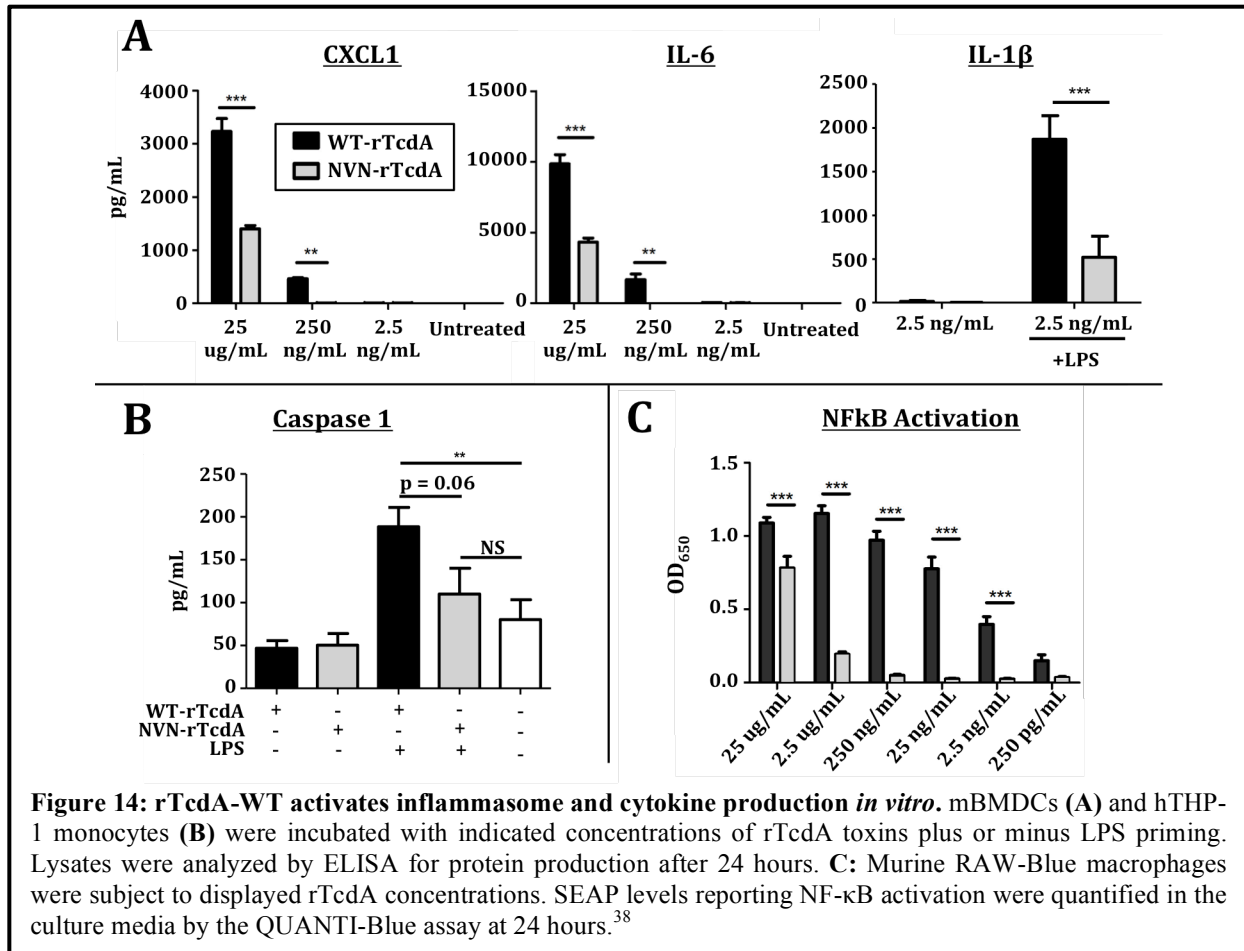
killed with a half-maximal inhibitory concentration (IC_{50}) near 0.7 nM. Cell viability is also reduced with increasing rTcdA-NVN, however cell death is significantly less than that seen for rTcdA-WT treatment, and is most likely due to toxicity from leaky endosomes since pore formation is still occurring. Furthermore, increasing the concentration of toxin results in less volume of media per well, which may also contribute to cell death. Although utilization of a wider concentration range of these toxins would have yielded more valuable data in **Figure 12B**, a visual verification of rTcdA-

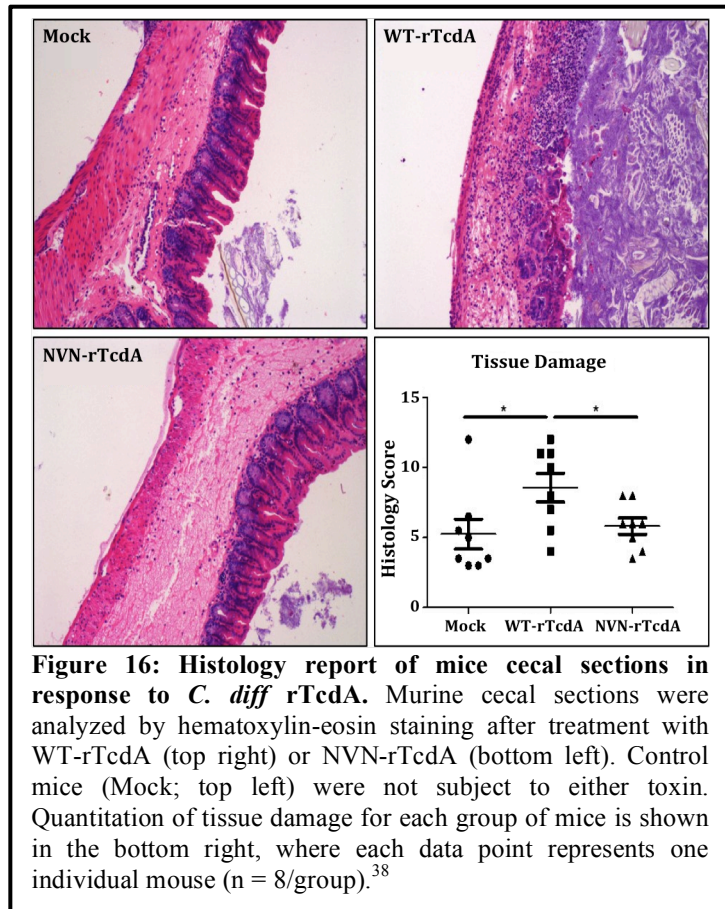
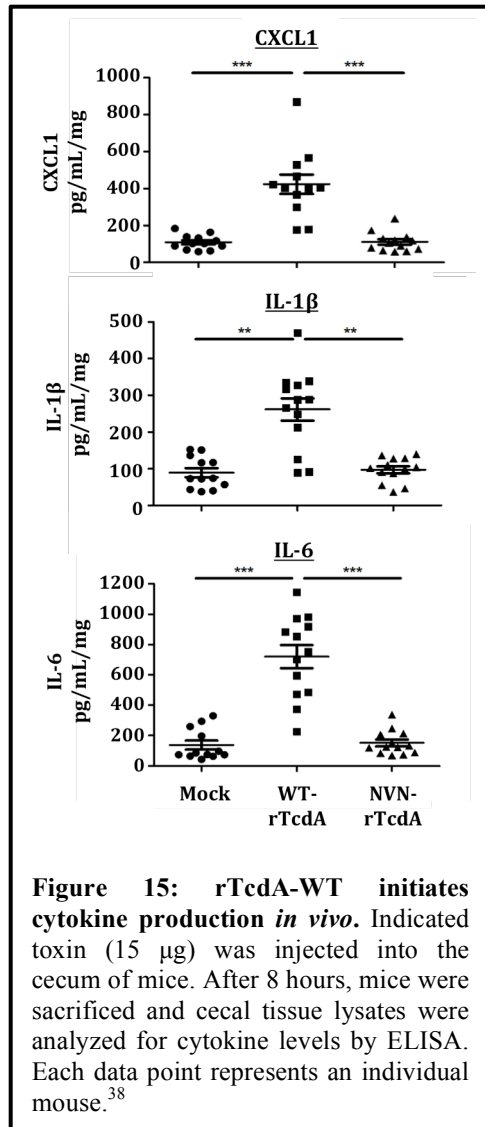
WT activity can also be seen in **Figure 13**. Phase-contrast microscopy displays rounding of HeLa cells after a 24-hour incubation period with 0.2 nM rTcdA-WT, indicating apoptosis and cell death.



Using these recombinant toxins in Dr. Bill Petri's lab, *in vitro* experiments done by Dr. Carrie Cowardin³⁸ with murine bone marrow derived dendritic cells (mBMDCs) and human THP-1 monocytes (hTHP-1)³⁷ indicated significantly elevated levels of CXCL1,

IL-6, IL-1 β , and caspase 1 after incubation with rTcdA-WT in comparison to NVN and controls (**Figure 14A-B**). CXCL1, also known as growth-related oncogene alpha or chemokine (C-X-C motif) ligand 1, is a chemokine (i.e., chemotactic cytokine) that uses methods of chemotaxis to recruit leukocytes to the site of inflammation and infection.⁵⁷ IL-1 β and IL-6, cytokines predominantly produced by monocytes, promote damaging inflammation via cellular infiltration. IL-1 β is responsible for the induction of IL-6, as well as many other cytokines, and is even involved in a positive feedback loop for its own upregulation. IL-1 β 's major contribution to inflammation comes from activation of the arachidonate/eicosanoid metabolism. Although IL-1 β and IL-6 share many biological roles, IL-6 is further involved in stimulating B-lymphocyte maturation and T-cell regulation, particularly the differentiation of T-cells into cytotoxic T-cells.⁵⁵ Caspase 1, also named interleukin-1 converting enzyme (ICE), is responsible for the proteolytic cleavage of pro-IL-1 β to its active IL-1 β form.⁵⁶ **Figure 14B** exhibits increased levels





placed into the cecum of mice by laparotomy and subsequently subjected to cecal tissue analysis. **Figure 15** demonstrates the escalated appearance of cytokines

(CXCL1, IL-1 β , and IL-6) determined by ELISA, within the *in vivo* surroundings of the mouse colon. The destruction caused by rTcdA-WT and said proinflammatory cytokines can be visualized in **Figure 16**. Mice injected with rTcdA-WT show a significantly disrupted epithelial barrier in comparison to rTcdA-NVN and controls.

The growing issue and prevalence of CDAD has shown to be more complicated than previously known. Not only does the *C. diff* pathogen play a major role in the disease, but recent evidence also shows the host immune system is partially to blame.^{32, 37, 53} These data demonstrate that the host immune system binds to and recognizes *C. diff* PAMPs as part of the priming

process. However glucosylation of cellular targets by rTcdA is necessary to induce significant inflammation and cytokine production.³⁸ These results further our understanding of how the *C. diff* glucosylating toxins and the host immune system act in concert to mediate CDAD colitis. The outcomes lend support to the ongoing development of toxin inhibitors, as this work shows that if delivered and dosed correctly, inhibited toxins would not activate the immune system in a manner that would damage the colon. This would also provide time for the patient to complete their course of primary antibiotics and undergo fecal transplantation to restore the gut microbiome to its initial state prior to the antibiotic therapy that allowed *C. diff* to colonize the patient's GI tract.

CHAPTER THREE METHODS

HeLa cell cultures. All procedures containing HeLa cells were carried out in a Biosafety Level 2 (BL2) lab following standard operating procedures. HeLa cells were initially obtained from the Pflum Lab at Wayne State University. Cells were grown in 25 mL culture flasks containing Eagle's Minimum Essential Media (EMEM) enriched with 10% fetal bovine serum (FBS) and 1% Antibiotic-Antimycotic (Anti-Anti) and incubated at 37 °C and 5 % CO₂. Once grown to roughly 80% confluency, adherent cells were passaged and regenerated as followed: EMEM was removed and 0.5 mg/mL trypsin was added before incubating the flasks at 37 °C and 5% CO₂ for 3 minutes. Trypsinized cells were then diluted 3X with EMEM and harvested (1000g, 7 min, ambient temp). Cells were resuspended with 5 mL EMEM and new culture flasks were seeded with 50 µL resuspended cells and 3 mL fresh EMEM before incubating as before.

Luminescent cell viability assay. CellTiter-Glo[®] luminescent reagents were purchased from Promega and the protocol was performed as previously described.⁶⁰ Briefly, HeLa cells

(30,000 cells/well) were cultured in an opaque 96-well plate with fresh EMEM containing 10% FBS and 1% Anti-Anti and incubated overnight at 37 °C and 5% CO₂. Cells were washed with serum-free EMEM (SF-EMEM) before addition of fresh SF-EMEM and varying concentrations of toxins to a total volume of 50 µL per well. Next, cells were incubated as above for 48 hours before cooling to room temperature, washing as above, and replacing fresh SF-EMEM (50-100 µL) in wells. An equal volume of CellTiter-Glo® luminescent reagent was added, the plate was agitated (2 min, ambient temp), and then luminescent data was acquired using a GENios Tecan Microplate Reader.

In vitro inflammasome activation and cytokine expression level determination. Carrie Cowardin, a collaborator in the Petri Lab at the University of Virginia, performed these experiments with rTcdA toxin provided by the Feig Lab (data recently published).³⁸ Briefly, cultured mammalian cells (murine bone marrow derived dendritic cells, human THP-1 monocytes, murine raw macrophages) were incubated for 24 hours with various concentrations of rTcdA-WT, rTcdA-NVN mutant, or neither (control), and in some cases lipopolysaccharide (LPS) as a priming signal. Cells were lysed and subject to ELISA to establish protein concentrations (CXCL1, IL-6, IL-1 β , and Caspase 1). Quantitation of NF- κ B upregulation i.e., inflammasome activation, was carried out with murine Raw-Blue™ macrophages, which are modified to contain a secreted embryonic alkaline phosphatase (SEAP)-reporter construct that is inducible by NF- κ B. Culture media was surveyed by the QUANTI-Blue™ assay at A₆₅₀^{61, 62} after 24 hours.

In vivo cytokine expression level determination. Carrie Cowardin from the University of Virginia performed these experiments.³⁸ In brief, mice underwent a cecal laparotomy;⁶³ meaning rTcdA-WT and rTcdA-NVN toxins were injected into the cecum (15 µg). After 8 hours, mice

were sacrificed. Cecal tissues were obtained, lysed, and the supernatant was subject to ELISA in order to quantitate cytokine production.

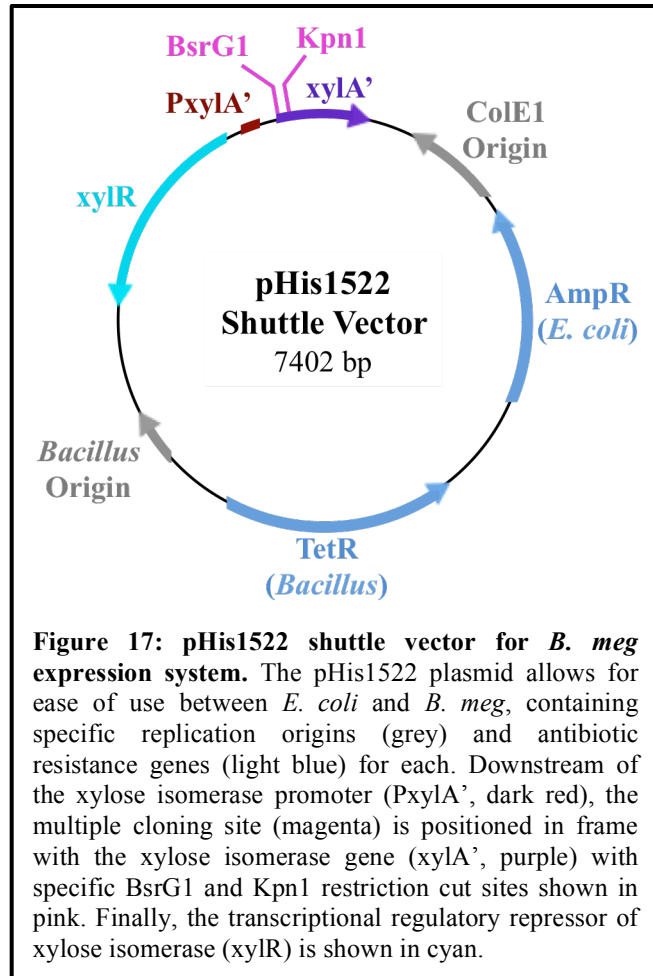
Immunohistochemistry staining and histological analysis. Carrie Cowardin (University of Virginia) also performed these experiments. Again, toxin was injected to the cecum of mice via laparotomy. Mice were then sacrificed after 8 hours as above. Cecal tissues were obtained, fixed with Bouin's solution (picric acid, acetic acid, formaldehyde) for 18 hours, embedded with paraffin for rigidity, sectioned, and stained with hematoxylin and eosin to visualize nuclei and the rest of the cell components, respectively.^{37, 38} Histology score was based on 5 parameters: Submucosal edema, inflammatory infiltrate, epithelial disruption, luminal exudate, and mucosal thickening.

CHAPTER FOUR:

Cloning, Expression, and Purification of *Clostridium difficile* Recombinant Toxin B

The homologous *C. diff* enterotoxins A and B share 48% sequence identity,⁶⁴ and as seen in **Figure 3**, the main structural difference between the two resides within the length of the CROP domain. Although TcdA/B exhibit similar mechanisms of infection and enzymatic functions, TcdB is actually 100-fold more efficacious at initiating cytopathic cell rounding and apoptotic cell death,⁴¹ most likely attributed to a shorter CROP domain that is less able to occlude GTD and CPD activity.^{16,48} Also in contrast to TcdA, high concentrations of TcdB have been shown to cause necrotic cell death via an alternative NADPH oxidase-mediated pathway, portraying the sudden depletion of cellular ATP, release of lactate dehydrogenase, and disruption of the cell membrane.^{41,65,66} Interestingly, the necrosis phenotype has been revealed to persist in cells treated with CPD/GTD-inactive TcdB mutants,⁶⁵ indicating the sole necessity for functioning TD^{39,64} and CROP domains.⁴¹ To further advocate the potential importance of TcdB-induced necrosis regarding CDAD, studies show the elevated TcdB concentrations needed to exhibit this phenotype not only correlate to pathological colonic epithelial damage, but also compare to levels found in feces of clinical isolates with severe *C. diff* infection.^{65,67} Lastly, there are numerous hypervirulent and resistant *C. diff* strains emerging today, such as the early 2000s epidemic strain NAPI/027/BI that is known for increased TcdA/B production (roughly 16-fold and 23-fold, respectively) and ribotype 017, which is a sole producer of TcdB (A⁻B⁺).^{1,68,69} Because of the numerous aforementioned reasons, a more complete analysis of *C. diff* TcdB and therapeutic methods that successfully target this toxin are clinically important, and as all previous studies done in the Feig Lab have utilized *C. diff* TcdA, the cloning, expression, and purification of toxin B was needed.

Considering the great length of the TcdA/B genes, previous methods to clone rTcdA-WT and rTcdA-NVN in the Feig Lab included splitting the gene into segments to avoid possible errors in replication.⁵³ Although this technique was successful, it is also strenuous and time consuming. To sidestep previous methods, the DNA polymerase used to clone rTcdB was upgraded to Q5[®] High-Fidelity polymerase, which has 3' to 5' exonuclease activity and an error



rate of roughly 100-fold lower than *taq* and 12-fold lower than *pfu*.⁷⁰ Q5[®] polymerizes at an extremely fast rate of 6 kb/min and has shown to successfully replicate amplicons of less than or equal to 20 kb,⁷¹ which is more than 2.8 times the length of the targeted 7101 bp *tcdB* gene. Furthermore, Q5[®] polymerase results in blunt ends, allowing for uncomplicated TOPO cloning, is effective at manipulating DNA via site-directed mutagenesis,⁷¹ and has proven here to clone the entire *tcdB* gene without error.

Full length TcdA/B proteins are rather large (308 kDa and 270 kDa,

respectively) and do not express well in *E. coli*, therefore the *Bacillus megaterium* (*B. meg*) expression system (MoBiTec)⁷² known for oversized protein expression was used to provide a route for holotoxin production. The pHis1522 plasmid utilized in this system (**Figure 17**), possessing *E. coli*-specific ampicillin and *B. meg*-specific tetracycline resistance markers, is a

shuttle vector with relieved codon bias that allows for DNA manipulation in *E. coli* before transforming into *B. meg* for expression. Furthermore, the multiple cloning site within pHis1522 contains a built-in C-terminal 6X his tag and is positioned within xylA' (xylose isomerase-encoding gene) to permit xylose induction of TcdA/B protein expression.⁷²

A general overview of the *C. diff* *tcdB* cloning process, borrowed closely from Feng, *et al.*,⁷³ is illustrated in **Figure 18**. To begin, *tcdB* from *C. diff* genomic DNA (strain ATTC 9689D) was isolated and amplified by PCR utilizing Q5[®] High-Fidelity polymerase and primers 1 and 2

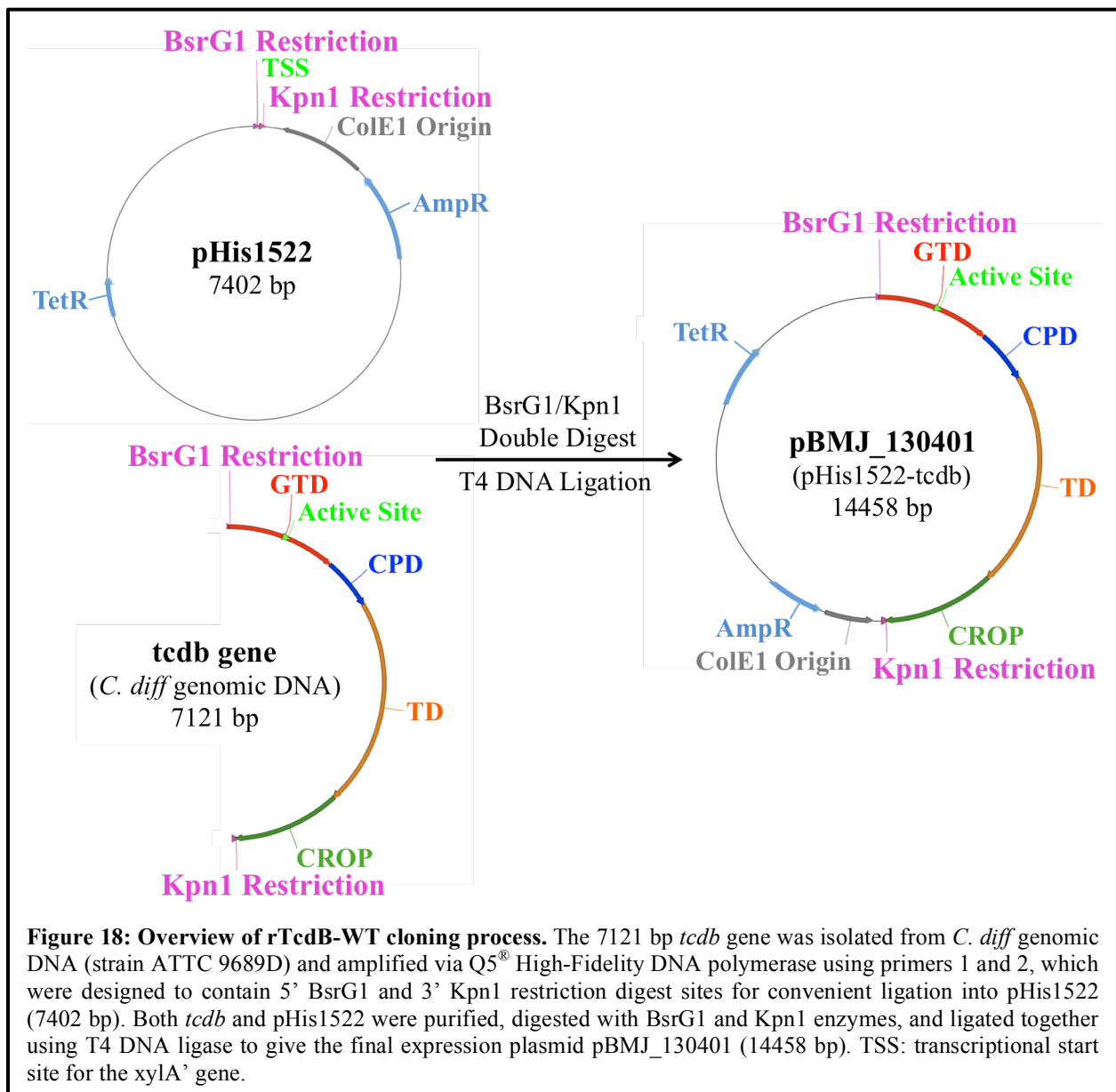


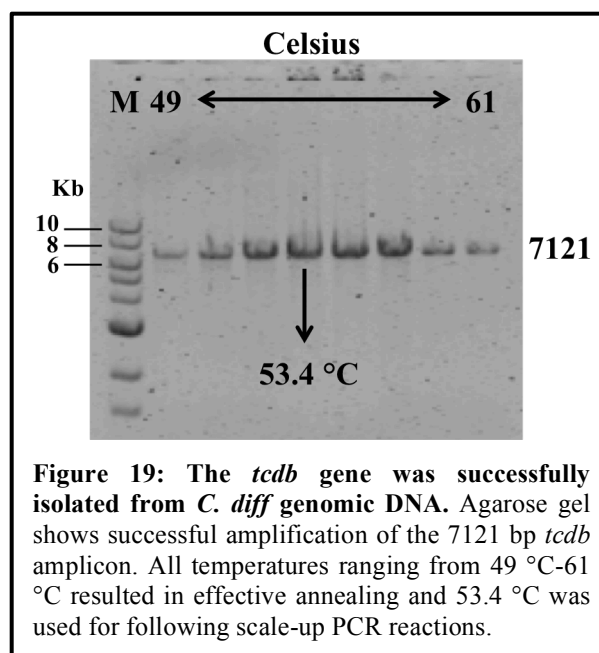
Table 2: Primers for cloning *rTcdB-WT* and *rTcdB-NVN*.

Primer Number	Name	Primer Sequences
1	TcdB_F	5' - GCGCTGTACA <u>ATGAGTTTAGTTAATAGAAAAC</u> - 3'
2	TcdB_R	5' - ATATATGGTACCCTTCACTAATCACTAATTGAGC - 3'
3	B2R_2	5' - TTAATCTTAGGTCTATCAGAAATTATACTTG - 3'
4	rTcdB_NVN_F2	5' - <u>GAAATTGGTGGTATGTATTTAaATGTTa</u> ATATGTTACCAGGAATACAACCAGAC - 3'
5	rTcdB_NVN_R2	5' - <u>GTCTGGTTGTATTCCTGGTAACATATaACATtTAAATACATACCACCAATTTC</u> - 3'

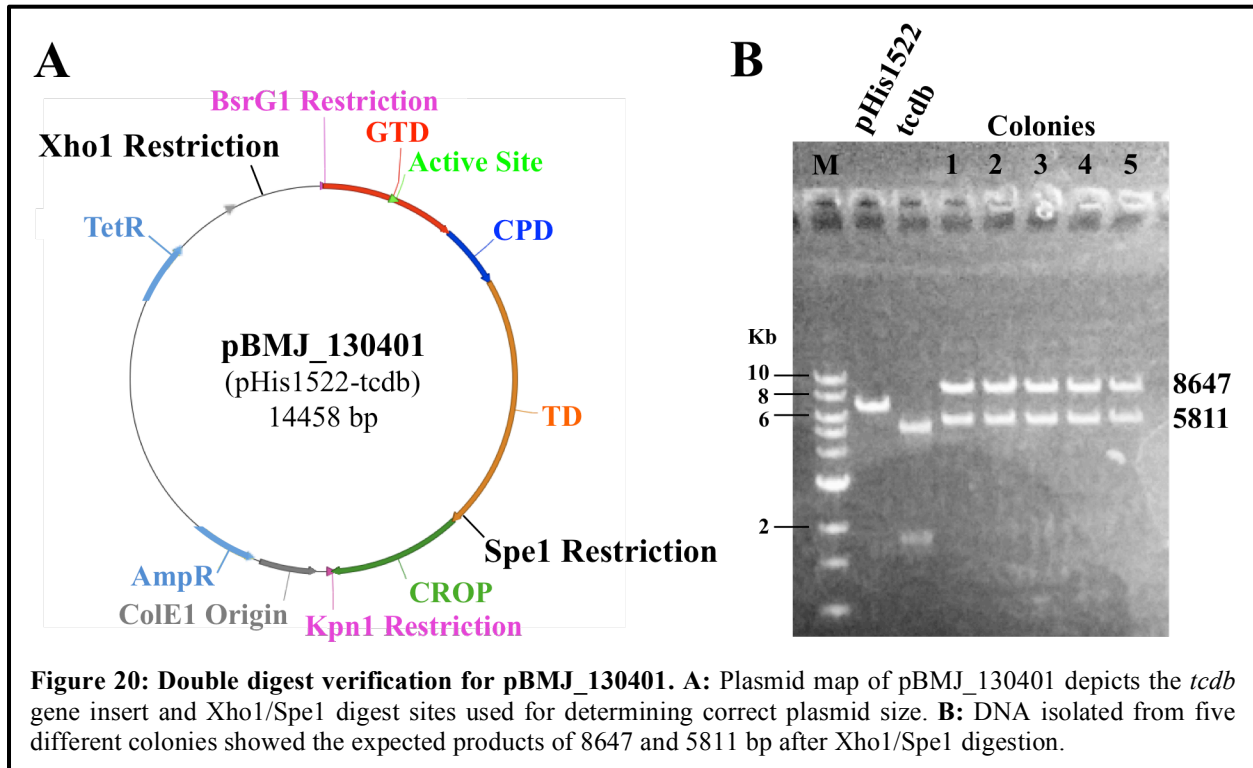
NOTE: Bold: restriction enzyme site. Underlined: primer binding complementary site. Lower case: uncomplementary bases for SDM.

(Table 2), which were equipped with 5' BsrG1 (primer 1; forward) and 3' Kpn1 (primer 2; reverse) restriction digest sites for convenient ligation into the multiple cloning site of the pHis1522 shuttle vector. Following PCR, the expected amplicon size of 7121 bp (full *tcdB* gene length plus primer overhang) was confirmed by agarose gel electrophoresis and is shown in Figure 19, where all attempted temperatures within the gradient ranging from 49 °C to 61 °C were effective for primer annealing and 53.4 °C was used for subsequent scale-up PCR reactions.

Once clean and quantified by A_{260} , the *C. diff tcdB* amplicon and the shuttle vector

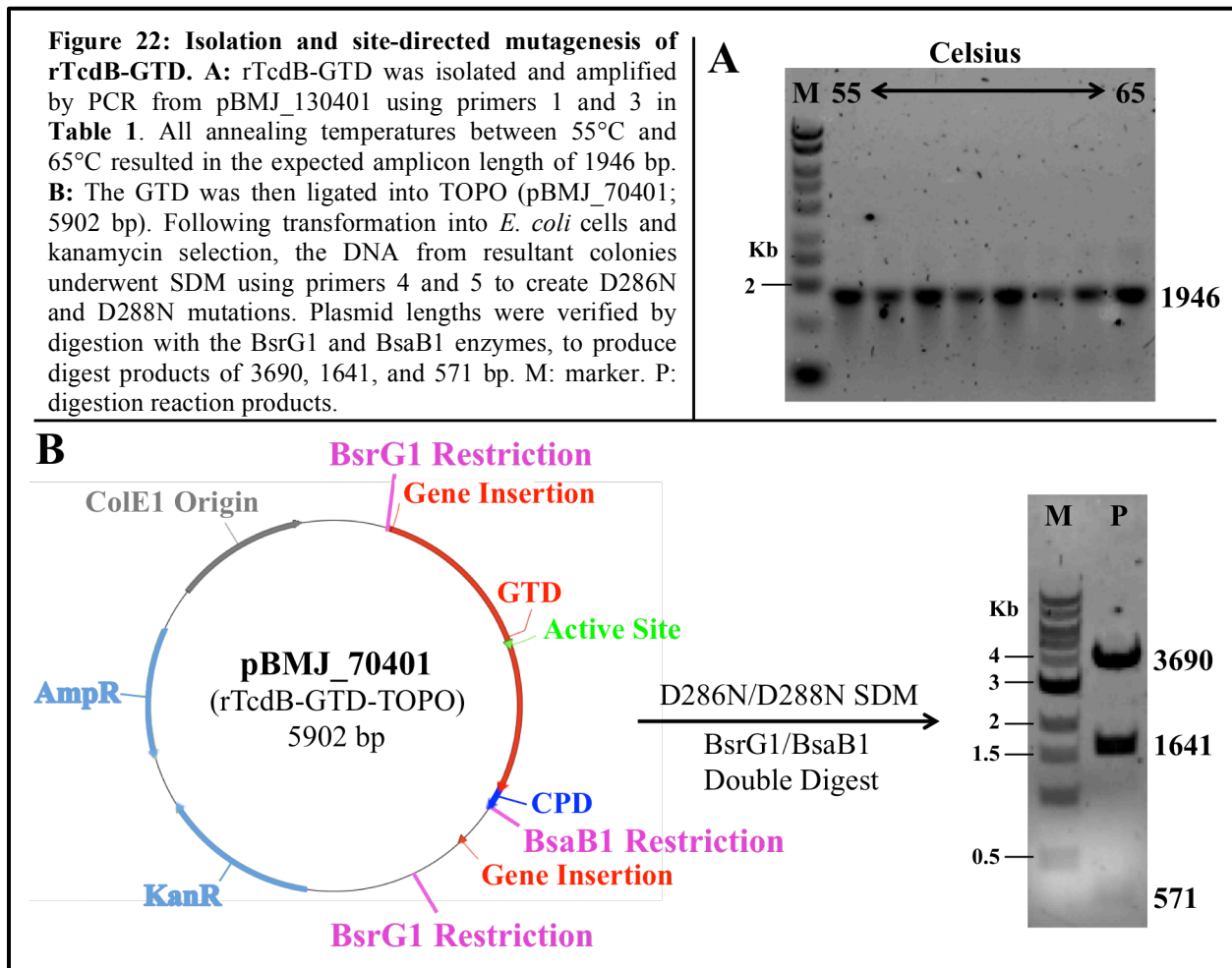
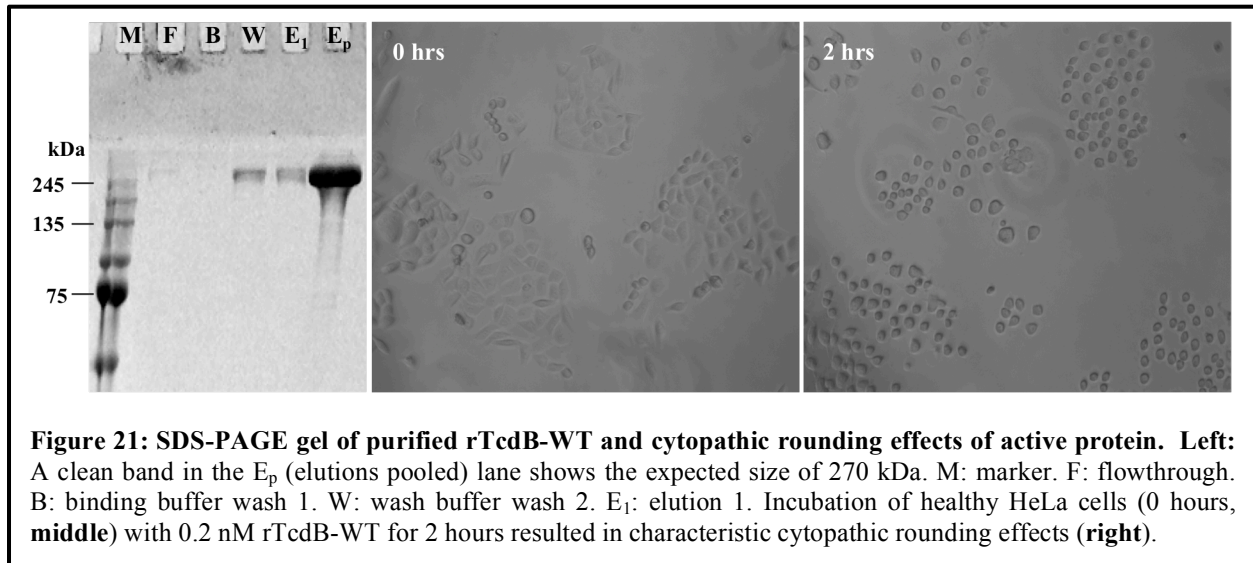


pHis1522 were digested with BsrG1 and Kpn1 restriction enzymes, ligated together using T4 DNA Ligase, and transformed into Top10 electrocompetent *E. coli* cells by electroporation. The ampicillin resistance marker within pHis1522 was used to select for transformant colonies containing viable plasmid, five of which were then isolated and purified. To confirm plasmid length prior to sequencing, Xho1 and Spe1 restriction enzymes with plasmid-specific and toxin-specific cut sites, respectively, were used to confirm the correctly sized products of 8647 and



5811 bp (**Figure 20**). Primers shown in **Table 3** subsequently verified the 7101 bp *tcdb* gene sequence to contain no errors. Finally, the *tcdb*-pHis1522 plasmid, now renamed pBMJ_130401, underwent transformation into *B. meg* for protein production. **Figure 21** shows purified rTcdB-WT at the correct size of 270 kDa, where a 16 hour expression period⁷³ of 1 liter cells resulted in roughly 1 mg of protein, which is roughly twice as much as toxin A per liter and most likely due to protein length. Furthermore, incubation of HeLa cells with 0.2 nM rTcdB-WT caused cytopathic rounding effects within a 2 hour period, proving the rTcdB-WT protein to be active (**Figure 21**).

For negative control, just as was done for rTcdA-NVN,⁵³ creation of the enzymatically inactive mutant rTcdB-NVN is dependent upon the aspartate to asparagine mutation within the active site of the GTD (D286N, D288N). To avoid producing error in the rest of the *tcdb* gene, toxin B GTD was first isolated and PCR amplified from pBMJ_130401 (1946 bp, **Figure 22A**) using primers 1 and 3 from **Table 2**, followed by direct ligation into TOPO vector



(pBMJ_70401; **Figure 22B left**), transformation into electrocompetent *E. coli* cells, and plating on kanamycin antibiotic for selection. Again, select transformant colonies were grown overnight to produce ample amounts of DNA that was then isolated and purified. Site-directed mutagenesis via PCR with primers 4 and 5 (**Table 2**) was done to confer D286N and D288N mutations within the GTD (pBMJ_70402), and digestion of the PCR product with BsrG1 and BsaB1 restriction enzymes resulted in products of 3690, 1641, and 571 bp which confirmed correct plasmid length as seen in **Figure 22B**. Although the smallest digest product of 571 bp ran below the indicated 500 bp marker, the first two bands and the overall digestion pattern within the gel seemed to be correct, therefore the plasmid was sent forth for sequencing and verified via the primers in **Table 4**. In order to create the final rTcdB-NVN *B. meg* expression plasmid, pBMJ_70402 and pBMJ_130401 were digested with BsrG1 and BsaB1 to give the rTcdB-GTD-NVN (1641 bp) and pHis1522-*tcdB* minus the GTD (12817 bp) products, which will need to undergo ligation and transformation into *B. meg*.

For many reasons, comprehending toxin B functionality in comparison to toxin A, as well as determining inhibitory treatment methods that are specified to each toxin is clinically important for impeding CDAD as a whole. Not only do some hypervirulent strains express toxin B as the sole virulence factor, but also TcdB is more potent in comparison to TcdA and it contains a poorly understood pathogenic mechanism that results in necrotic epithelial cell death in patients with CDAD. Experimentation pertaining to TcdA has been underway for quite some time in the Feig Lab, but previous research utilizing TcdB has been very minimal since *C. diff* toxins are rather costly and until now there wasn't an obtainable TcdB expression plasmid. Although the final ligation and transformation of the rTcdB-NVN plasmid have not been completed at this point, the data presented here shows sequence verification for rTcdB-WT

(pBMJ_130401; **Appendix I**) and the components of rTcdB-NVN (**Appendix II**), where expression of rTcdB-WT resulted in ample amounts of active protein that will elicit further mechanistic and inhibitory analysis of *C. diff* toxin B in the future.

Table 3: Sequencing primers for rTcdB-WT.

Primer Number	Name	Sequences of rTcdB-WT Sequencing Primers
1	B1F	5' - GGATATTCTGATAGAGAAAT - 3'
2	B1R	5' - TCACTATTTACATCTTTC - 3'
3	B2F	5' - GAAGAATATCATAATATGTC - 3'
4	B2R	5' - TTAATCTTAGGTCTATCAGA - 3'
5	B3F	5' - TTACAAGGAGATAAAATTAG - 3'
6	B3R	5' - TACTAACTTACCATTACAG - 3'
7	B4F	5' - GAATTTAACTAATAGAATC - 3'
8	B4R	5' - TCTTCTTTTGTACTTCCAA - 3'
9	B5F	5' - TACTTTTAGTTCCTTTAGCA - 3'
10	B5R	5' - TCAGATACAAATAAACCTTC - 3'
11	B6F	5' - GTTGATTATTATCTAAATC - 3'
12	B6R	5' - GTACTAAATACACCTGTTTG - 3'
13	B7F	5' - TAATAACTTTGGAATGATGG - 3'
14	B7R	5' - TCACTTTCATTTCCATATC - 3'
15	B8F	5' - GGAAATGAAGAAGGTGAAG - 3'
16	B8R	5' - ACTTTGTAAGAATGTCAACT - 3'

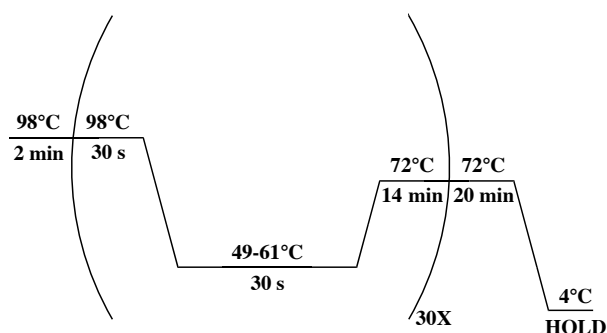
Table 4: Sequencing primers for rTcdB-NVN.

Primer Number	Name	Sequences of rTcdB-NVN Sequencing Primers
1	B1R	5' - TCACTATTTACATCTTTC - 3'
2	B2F	5' - GAAGAATATCATAATATGTC - 3'
3	B2R	5' - TTAATCTTAGGTCTATCAGA - 3'
4	B3F	5' - TTACAAGGAGATAAAATTAG - 3'
5	M13 F (-20)	standard for TOPO - supplied by sequencing agency
6	M13 R	standard for TOPO - supplied by sequencing agency

CHAPTER FOUR METHODS

***Clostridium difficile* rTcdB-WT cloning.** Procedure to isolate, clone, and express *C. diff* toxin B was closely borrowed from Feng, *et al.*⁷³ Here, *C. diff* genomic DNA (90556-M6S) was purchased from ATTC™ (item number 9689D-5 DR), all primers were synthesized and purchased from Sigma, and PCR reactions were done using a Bio-Rad MyCycler Thermo Cycler (catalog #19209590). In short, *rtcdB* was isolated using primers 1 and 2 (**Table 2**) from *C. diff* genomic DNA as follows:

<i>tcdB</i> Gene Isolation	[Stock]	[Final]	1X Vol (μL)
Q5 RXN buffer	5X	1X	4
For Primer "TcdB_F"	10 μM	0.5 μM	1
Rev Primer "TcdB_R"	10 μM	0.5 μM	1
<i>C. diff</i> genomic DNA	20 ng/μL	20 ng	1
dNTP's	10 mM	0.3 mM	0.6
Q5 High Fidelity DNA polymerase	2 U/μL	0.004 U	0.2
Water	-	-	12.2
Total (μL)	-	-	20

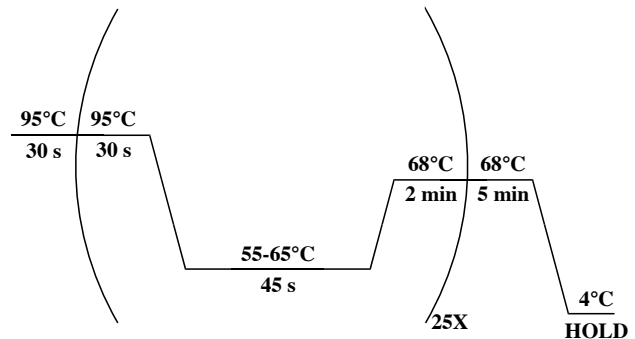


Primers 1 and 2 were equipped with BsrG1 (forward) and Kpn1 (reverse) cut sites and an annealing temperature of 53.4 °C was used to move forward. The *tcdB* amplicon was purified using MicroElute Cycle Pure Kit Centrifugation Protocol (OMEGA), eluted in 10 mM Tris-HCl pH 8.5, and quantified by A_{260} . pHis1522 (MoBiTec) and the *tcdB* amplicon then underwent double digestion with BsrG1 and Kpn1 restriction enzymes (3 μg DNA, 1X NEB 2.1 Reaction Buffer, 30 U BsrG1, and 30 U Kpn1) at 37 °C for 4 hours (0.2 U of calf intestinal alkaline phosphatase (CIP) was added to the pHis1522 plasmid digest reaction at the 3 hour mark). Next, reactions were mixed with 1X crystal violet loading dye (5% glycerol, 3.3 mM EDTA, 16.6 μg/mL crystal violet), loaded onto a 0.8% agarose gel containing 1.6 mg/mL crystal violet, separated by gel electrophoresis (80 V, 1 hr), and purified using the EZNA Gel Extraction Kit (OMEGA). After quantitation at A_{260} , pHis1522 and *tcdB* insert were ligated together (20 U T4

DNA ligase, 1X T4 buffer, 50 ng pHis1522, 37.5 ng *tcdB* DNA) at RT for 15 min following a 10 min heat-inactivation period at 65 °C, transforming into top10 *E. coli* cells by electroporation (1.5 µL ligation rxn, 75 µL competent cells), outgrowing in 200 µL standard LB broth (37 °C, 250 rpm, 30 min), plating on 100 µg/mL ampicillin plates, and incubating at 37 °C overnight. Resulting colonies were minipreped (OMEGA EZNA Plasmid DNA Mini Kit II) and sequenced (Wayne State University School of Medicine Applied Genomics Technology Center) with primers seen in **Table 3**. Successful sequencing of *rtcdB* is shown in **Appendix I**. pHis1522-*tcdB* (pBMJ_130401) was transformed into *B. meg*, expressed, and purified as stated previously (**Chapter 2 Methods**).

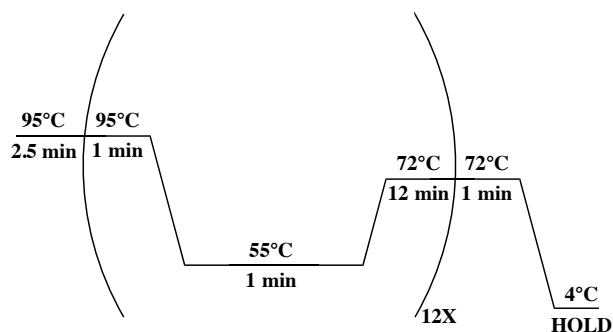
Clostridium difficile *rTcdB*-NVN cloning. Primers 1 and 3 from **Table 2** were used to isolate and amplify *rtcdB*-GTD as follows:

<i>tcdB</i> -GTD Isolation	[Stock]	[Final]	1X Vol (µL)
<i>taq</i> RXN buffer	10X	1X	2
For Primer "TcdB_F"	10 µM	0.5 µM	1
Rev Primer "B2R_2"	10 µM	0.5 µM	1
DNA (pBMJ_130401)	2.86 ng/µL	0.5 ng	0.175
MgCl ₂	15 mM	1.5 mM	2
dNTP's	10 mM	0.5 mM	1
<i>taq</i> polymerase	5 U/µL	0.625 U	0.125
Water	-	-	12.7
Total (µL)	-	-	20



The PCR reaction with annealing temperature of 61.1 °C was used to move forward. Ligation of *tcdB*-GTD into pCR-XL-TOPO vector was performed at a 3:1 insert to vector ratio (RT, 30 min) before transforming into top 10 *E. coli* cells and plating on amp LB-agar plates as above. Selected colonies were then minipreped (OMEGA EZNA Plasmid DNA Mini Kit II) and resulting DNA (pBMJ_70401) was used with primers 4 and 5 (**Table 2**) to create D286N/D288N mutations as follows:

<i>tcdB</i> -NVN SDM PCR	[Stock]	[Final]	1X Vol (μL)
<i>pfu</i> RXN buffer	10X	1X	2.5
For Primer "rTcdB_NVN_F2"	10 μM	0.25 μM	0.625
Rev Primer "rTcdB_NVN_R2"	10 μM	0.25 μM	0.625
DNA (pBMJ_70401)	10 ng/μL	10 ng	1
dNTP's	10 mM	0.2 mM	0.5
<i>pfu</i> DNA polymerase	5 U/μL	1.25 U	0.25
Water	-	-	19.5
Total (μL)	-	-	25



Sequencing of pBMJ_70402 was done using primers in **Table 4** and verification can be seen in **Appendix II**.

HeLa cell cultures. HeLa cell cultures were obtained from the Pflum Lab (Wayne State University) and contained to BL2 standard protocols. See **Chapter 3 Methods** for further maintenance procedures and protocols utilizing HeLa cells. Visual cell killing assays were done as described in **Chapter 2 Methods** with the exception of adding HQS-Epoxy inhibitor peptide.

APPENDIX I: rTcdB-WT Sequence Alignment

44

FINAL_pHIS1522_TcdB_BMJ.ape (pBMJ_130401; colony 1). Any errors/mismatches were confirmed manually by chromatogram.

From 16 to 7126 alignment to
3591_B01_TcdB1_B1R_007.seq-- Matches:225; Mismatches:0; Gaps:6906; Unattempted:0
3591_C01_TcdB1_B2F_006.seq-- Matches:882; Mismatches:0; Gaps:6229; Unattempted:0
3591_D01_TcdB1_B2R_005.seq-- Matches:709; Mismatches:0; Gaps:6402; Unattempted:0
3591_F01_TcdB1_B3R_003.seq-- Matches:849; Mismatches:1; Gaps:6261; Unattempted:0
3591_H01_TcdB1_B4R_001.seq-- Matches:766; Mismatches:0; Gaps:6345; Unattempted:0
3591_A02_TcdB1_B5F_008.seq-- Matches:816; Mismatches:0; Gaps:6295; Unattempted:0
3591_B02_TcdB1_B5R_007.seq-- Matches:197; Mismatches:2; Gaps:6912; Unattempted:0
3591_C02_TcdB1_B6F_006.seq-- Matches:444; Mismatches:0; Gaps:6667; Unattempted:0
3591_D02_TcdB1_B6R_005.seq-- Matches:752; Mismatches:0; Gaps:6359; Unattempted:0
3591_E02_TcdB1_B7F_004.seq-- Matches:995; Mismatches:0; Gaps:6116; Unattempted:0
3591_G02_TcdB1_B8F_002.seq-- Matches:579; Mismatches:0; Gaps:6543; Unattempted:0

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997<~----->997
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68>~-----CTTAAAAAAATTTAAGGAATATCTAGTTACAGAAGTATTAGAGCTAAAGAATAATAATTTAA>129
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63>----->63
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      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
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997<-----<997
972<-----<972
63>----->63
232<-----<232
68>----->68
848<-----<848
24>----->24
341>----->341

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      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
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813<-----<813
997<-----<997
972<-----<972
63>----->63
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68>----->68
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24>----->24
341>----->341

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1096>ATATTCTCATCACTTGGTGATATGGAGGCATCACCAGTCTAGAAAGTTGCAATTTAATAGTAAGGGTATTATAAATCAAGGGCTAATTTCTGTGAAAG>1195
104<-----<104
930>ATATTCTCATCACTTGGTGA----->949
812<-----CTTGGTGATATGGAGGCATCACCAGTCTAGAAAGTTGCAATTTAATAGTAAGGGTATTATAAATCAAGGGCTAATTTCTGTGAAAG>725
997<-----<997
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63>----->63
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1196>ACTCATATTGTAGCAATTTAATAGTAAACAAATCGAGAATAGATATAAAATATTGAATAATAGTTTAAATCCAGCTATTAGCGAGGATAATGATTTTAA>1295
104<-----<104
949>----->949
724<ACTCATATTGTAGCAATTTAATAGTAAACAAATCGAGAATAGATATAAAATATTGAATAATAGTTTAAATCCAGCTATTAGCGAGGATAATGATTTTAA>625
997<-----<997
972<-----<972
63>----->63
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      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
1296>TACTACAACGAATACCTTTATGTAGTATAATGGCTGAAGCTAATGCAGATAATGGTAGATTTTATGATGGAAGTATTAAAGAGTTGGTTTC>1395
104<-----<104
949>----->949
624<TACTACAACGAATACCTTTATGTAGTATAATGGCTGAAGCTAATGCAGATAATGGTAGATTTTATGATGGAAGTATTAAAGAGTTGGTTTC>525
997<-----<997
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63>----->63
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      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
1396>TTCCAGATGTTAAACTACTATTAACTTAAAGTGGCCCTGAAGCATATGCGGCAGCTTATCAAGATTTTATTAATGTTTAAAGAAGGCAGTATGAATATCC>1495
104<-----<104
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524<TTCCAGATGTTAAACTACTATTAACTTAAAGTGGCCCTGAAGCATATGCGGCAGCTTATCAAGATTTTATTAATGTTTAAAGAAGGCAGTATGAATATCC>425
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63>----->63
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      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
1496>ATTTGATAGAAGCTGATTTAAGAACTTTGAAATCTCTAAACTAATATTTCTCAATCAACTGAACAAGAAATGGCTAGCTTATGGTCATTGACGATGC>1595
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949>----->949
424<ATTTGATAGAAGCTGATTTAAGAACTTTGAAATCTCTAAACTAATATTTCTCAATCAACTGAACAAGAAATGGCTAGCTTATGGTCATTGACGATGC>325
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63>----->63
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      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
1596>AAGAGCTAAAGCTCAATTTGAAGAATATAAAAGGAATTATTTTGAAGGTTCTCTTGGTGAAGATGATAATCTTGATTTTCTCAAAATATAGTAGTTGAC>1695
104<-----<104
949>----->949
324<AAGAGCTAAAGCTCAATTTGAAGAATATAAAAGGAATTATTTTGAAGGTTCTCTTGGTGAAGATGATAATCTTGATTTTCTCAAAATATAGTAGTTGAC>225
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63>----->63
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1696>AAGGAGTATCTTTTAGAAAAAATATCTTCATTAGCAAGAAGTTCAGAGAGAGGATATATACACTATATTGTTTCAGTTACAAGGAGATAAAATTAGTTATG>1795
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949>----->949
224<AAGGAGTATCTTTTAGAAAAAATATCTTCATTAGCAAGAAGTTCAGAGAGAGGATATATACACTATATTGTTTCAGTTACAAGGAGATAAAATTAGTTATG<125
997<-----<997
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63>----->63
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      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
1796>AAGCAGCATGTAACCTATTGCAAAAGACTCCTTATGgATAGTGTAAGTATTTTCAGAAAAATATAGAAGATTGCAAAATTGCATATTATATAATCCTGGAGA>1895
104<-----<104
949>----->949
124<AAGCAGCATGTAACCTATTG-----<104
996<-----CTTATTGCAAAAGACTCCTTATGATAGTGTAAGTATTTTCAGAAAAATATAGAAGATTGCAAAATTGCATATTATATAATCCTGGAGA>910
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68>----->68
848<-----<848
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      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
1896>TGGTGAAATACAAGAAATAGACAAGTATAAAATTTCCAAGTATAATTTCTGTAGACCTAAGATTAAATTAACATTTTATGGTCATGGTAAAGATGAATTT>1995
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949>----->949
104<-----<104
909<TGGTGAAATACAAGAAATAGACAAGTATAAAATTTCCAAGTATAATTTCTGTAGAC[REDACTED]TAAGATTAAATTAACATTTTATGGTCATGGTAAAGATGAATTT>810
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63>----->63
232<-----<232
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1996>AATACTGATATATTGTCAGGTTTTGATGTAGATTTCATTATCCACAGAAATAGAAGCAGCAATAGATTTAGCTAAAGAGGATATTTCTCCTAAGTCAATAG>2095
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949>----->949
104<-----<104
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972<-----<972
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68>----->68
848<-----<848
24>----->24
341>----->341

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      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
2096>AAATAAATTTATTAGGATGTAATATGTTTAGCTACTCTATCAACGTAGAGGAGACTTATCCTGGAAAAATTATTACTTAAAGTTAAAGATAAAATATCAGA>2195
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949>----->949
104<-----<104
709<AAATAAATTTATTAGGATGTAATATGTTTAGCTACTCTATCAACGTAGAGGAGACTTATCCTGGAAAAATTATTACTTAAAGTTAAAGATAAAATATCAGA>610
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232<-----<232
68>----->68
848<-----<848
24>----->24
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2196>ATTAATGCCATCTATAAGTCAAGACTCTATTATAGTAAGTGCAAAATCAATATGAAGTTAGAATAAAATAGTGAAGGAAGAAGAGAATTATTGGATCATTCT>2295
104<-----<104
949>----->949
104<-----<104
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63>----->63
232<-----<232
68>----->68
848<-----<848

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24>~~~~~>24
341>~~~~~>341

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2296>GGTGAATGGATAAAATAAGAAGAAAGTATTATAAAGGATATTTTCATCAAAAGAATATATATCATTTAATCCTAAAGAAAATAAAATTACAGTAAATCTA>2395
104<~~~~~<104
949>~~~~~>949
104<~~~~~<104
509<GGTGAATGGATAAAATAAGAAGAAAGTATTATAAAGGATATTTTCATCAAAAGAATATATATCATTTAATCCTAAAGAAAATAAAATTACAGTAAATCTA>410
972<~~~~~<972
63>~~~~~>63
232<~~~~~<232
68>~~~~~>68
848<~~~~~<848
24>~~~~~>24
341>~~~~~>341

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2396>AAAATTTACCTGAGCTATCTACATTATTACAAGAAATTAGAAATAATTTCTAATTTCAAGTGATATTGAACTAGAAGAAAAGTAATGTTAACAGAAATGTGA>2495
104<~~~~~<104
949>~~~~~>949
104<~~~~~<104
409<AAAATTTACCTGAGCTATCTACATTATTACAAGAAATTAGAAATAATTTCTAATTTCAAGTGATATTGAACTAGAAGAAAAGTAATGTTAACAGAAATGTGA>310
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63>~~~~~>63
232<~~~~~<232
68>~~~~~>68
848<~~~~~<848
24>~~~~~>24
341>~~~~~>341

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2496>GATAAAATGTTATTTCAAATATAGATACGCAAAATTGTTGAGGAAAGGATTGAAGAAGCTAAGAATTTAACTTCTGACTCTATTAATTATATAAAAGATGAA>2595
104<~~~~~<104
949>~~~~~>949
104<~~~~~<104
309<GATAAAATGTTATTTCAAATATAGATACGCAAAATTGTTGAGGAAAGGATTGAAGAAGCTAAGAATTTAACTTCTGACTCTATTAATTATATAAAAGATGAA>210
972<~~~~~<972
63>~~~~~>63
232<~~~~~<232
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848<~~~~~<848
24>~~~~~>24
341>~~~~~>341

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2596>TTTAAACTAATAGAATCTATTTCTGATGCACTATGTGACTTAAAACAACAGAATGAATTAGAAGATTCTCATTTTATATCTTTTGAGGACATATCAGAGA>2695
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949>~~~~~>949
104<~~~~~<104
209<TTTAAACTAATAGAATCTATTTCTGATGCACTATGTGACTTAAAACAACAGAATGAATTAGAA-
971<~~~~~<971
63>~~~~~>63
232<~~~~~<232
68>~~~~~>68
848<~~~~~<848
24>~~~~~>24
341>~~~~~>341

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2696>CTGATGAGGGATTTAGTATAAGATTATTATAAAGAACTGGAGAATCTATATTGTAGAACTGAAAAACAATATTCTCTGAATATGCTAATCATAT>2795
104<~~~~~<104
949>~~~~~>949
104<~~~~~<104
147<~~~~~<147
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63>~~~~~>63
232<~~~~~<232
68>~~~~~>68
848<~~~~~<848
24>~~~~~>24
341>~~~~~>341

* * * * *
2796>AACTGAAGAGATTTCTAAGATAAAAGGTACTATATTTGATACTGTAAATGGTAAGTTAGTAAAAAAGTAAATTTAGATACTACACACGAAGTAAATACT>2895
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949>~~~~~>949
104<~~~~~<104
147<~~~~~<147
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63>~~~~~>63
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68>~~~~~>68

848<~~~~~<848
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 2896>TTAAATGCTGCATTTTATACAATCATTAAATAGATATAATAGTTCTAAAGAATCTCTTAGTAATTTAAGTGTAGCAATGAAAGTCCAAGTTTACGCTC>2995
 104<~~~~~<104
 949>~~~~~>949
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 147<~~~~~<147
 721<TTAAATGCTGCATTTTATACAATCATTAAATAGATATAATAGTTCTAAAGAATCTCTTAGTAATTTAAGTGTAGCAATGAAAGTCCAAGTTTACGCTC>622
 63>~~~~~>63
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 68>~~~~~>68
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 2996>AATTATTTAGTACTGGTTTAAATACTATTACAGATGCAGCCAAAGTTGTTGAATTAGTATCAACTGCATTAGATGAAACTATAGACTTACTTCCTACATT>3095
 104<~~~~~<104
 949>~~~~~>949
 104<~~~~~<104
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 621<AATTATTTAGTACTGGTTTAAATACTATTACAGATGCAGCCAAAGTTGTTGAATTAGTATCAACTGCATTAGATGAAACTATAGACTTACTTCCTACATT>522
 63>~~~~~>63
 232<~~~~~<232
 68>~~~~~>68
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 24>~~~~~>24
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 3096>ATCTGAAGGATTACCTATAATTGCAACTATTATAGATGGTGTAAAGTTTAGGTGCAGCAATCAAAGAGCTAAGTGAAACGAGTGACCCATTATTAAGACAA>3195
 104<~~~~~<104
 949>~~~~~>949
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 3196>GAAATAGAAGCTAAGATAGGTATAATGGCAGTAAATTTAACAACAGCTACAACGCAATCATTACTTCATCTTTGGGGgTAGCTAGTGGATTAGTATAC>3295
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 949>~~~~~>949
 104<~~~~~<104
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 63>~~~~~>63
 232<~~~~~<232
 68>~~~~~>68
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 3296>TTTtagttccTTTAGCAGGAATTTcAGCAGGTATACCAAGCTTAGTAAACAATGAACttGTACTTCGAGATAAGGCAACAAGGTTGTAGATTATTTTAA>3395
 104<~~~~~<104
 949>~~~~~>949
 104<~~~~~<104
 147<~~~~~<147
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 63>~~~~~>63
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 68>~~~~~>68
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 3396>ACATGTTTCATTAGTTGAAACTGAAGGAGTATTTACTTTATTAGATGATAAAATAATGATGCCACAAGATGATTTAGTGATATCAGAAATAGATTTTAAAT>3495
 104<~~~~~<104
 949>~~~~~>949
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 147<~~~~~<147
 221<ACATGTTTCATTAGTT
 64>~~~~GTTTCATTAGTTGAAACTGAAGGAGTATTTACTTTATTAGATGATAAAATAATGATGCCACAAGATGATTTAGTGATATCAGAAATAGATTTTAAAT>159
 232<~~~~~<232

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68>~~~~~>68
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24>~~~~~>24
341>~~~~~>341

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      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
3496>AATAATCAATAGTTTTAGGTAATGTGAAATCTGGAGAATGGAAGGTGGTTCAGGTCATACTGTAAC TGATGATATAGATCACTTCTTTTCAGCACCAT>3595
104<~~~~~<104
949>~~~~~>949
104<~~~~~<104
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160>AATAATCAATAGTTTTAGGTAATGTGAAATCTGGAGAATGGAAGGTGGTTCAGGTCATACTGTAAC TGATGATATAGATCACTTCTTTTCAGCACCAT>259
232<~~~~~<232
68>~~~~~>68
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3596>CAATAACATATAGAGAGCCACACTTATCTATATATGACGTATTGGAAGTACAAAAAGAAGAACTTGATTGTCAAAGATTTAATGGTATTACCTAATGC>3695
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949>~~~~~>949
104<~~~~~<104
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260>CAATAACATATAGAGAGCCACACTTATCTATATATGACGTATTGGAAGTACAAAAAGAAGAACTTGATTGTCAAAGATTTAATGGTATTACCTAATGC>359
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341>~~~~~>341

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3696>TCCAAATAGAGTATTTGCTTGGGAAACAGGATGGACACCAGGTTTAAGAAGCTTAGAAAATGATGGCACAACAACTGTTAGACCGTATAAGAGATAACTAT>3795
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949>~~~~~>949
104<~~~~~<104
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360>TCCAAATAGAGTATTTGCTTGGGAAACAGGATGGACACCAGGTTTAAGAAGCTTAGAAAATGATGGCACAACAACTGTTAGACCGTATAAGAGATAACTAT>459
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68>~~~~~>68
848<~~~~~<848
24>~~~~~>24
341>~~~~~>341

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3796>GAAGGTGAGTTTTATTGGAGATATTTTGCTTTTATAGCTGATGCTTTAATAACAACATTAAAACCAAGATATGAAGATACTAATATAAGAATAAATTTAG>3895
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949>~~~~~>949
104<~~~~~<104
147<~~~~~<147
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460>GAAGGTGAGTTTTATTGGAGATATTTTGCTTTTATAGCTGATGCTTTAATAACAACATTAAAACCAAGATATGAAGATACTAATATAAGAATAAATTTAG>559
232<~~~~~<232
68>~~~~~>68
848<~~~~~<848
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3896>ATAGTAATACTAGAAGTTTTATAGTTCCTCAATAATAACTACAGAATATATAAGAGAAAAATTATCATATTCTTCTATGGTTCAGGAGGAACCTATGCATT>3995
104<~~~~~<104
949>~~~~~>949
104<~~~~~<104
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560>ATAGTAATACTAGAAGTTTTATAGTTCCTCAATAATAACTACAGAATATATAAGAGAAAAATTATCATATTCTTCTATGGTTCAGGAGGAACCTATGCATT>659
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68>~~~~~>68
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      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
3996>GTCTCTTTCTCAATATAATATGGGTATAAATATAGAATTAAGTGAAAGTGATGTTGGATTATAGATGTTGATAATGTTGTGAGAGATGTAAC TATAGAA>4095
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949>~~~~~>949
104<~~~~~<104
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660>GTCTCTTTCTCAATATAATATGGGTATAAATATAGAATTAAGTGAAAGTGATGTTGGATTATAGATGTTGATAATGTTGTGAGAGATGTAAC TATAGAA>759

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      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
4096>TCTGATAAAATTA AAAAGGTGATTTAATAGAAAGGTATTTTATCTACACTAAGTATTGAAGAGAATAAAATTTATCTTAAATAGCCATGAGATTAAATTTTT>4195
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949>~>949
104<~<104
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760>TCTGATAAAATTA AAAAGGTGATTTAATAGAAAGGTATTTTATCTACACTAAGTATTGAAGAGAATAAAATTTATCTTAAATAGCCATGAGATTAAATTTTT>859
232<~<232
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      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
4196>CTGGTGAGGTAAATGGAAGTAATGGATTGTTTCTTTAACATTTTCAATTTTAGAAGGAATAAATGCAATTATAGAAGTTGATTATTATCTAAATCATA>4295
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104<~<104
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860>CTGGTGAGGTAAATGGAAGT~>879
231<~<142
68>~>68
848<~<848
24>~>24
341>~>341

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      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
4296>TAAATTACTTATTTCTGGCGAATTAAAAATATTGATGTTAAATTCAAATCATATTCAACAGAAAATAGATTATATAGGATTCAAATAGCGAATTACAGAAA>4395
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949>~>949
104<~<104
147<~<147
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879>~>879
141<TAAATTACTTATTTCTGGCGAATTAAAAATATTGATGTTAAATTCAAATCATATTCAACAGAAAATAGATTATATAGGANNCAATAGCGAATTACAGAAA<42
69>~>72
848<~<848
24>~>24
341>~>341

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4396>AATATACCATATAGCTTTGTAGATTAGTGAAGGAAAAGAGAATGGTTTTATTAAATGGTTCAACAAAAGAAGGTTTATTGTATCTGAATTACCTGATGTAG>4495
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949>~>949
104<~<104
147<~<147
206<~<206
879>~>879
41<AATATACCA~>33
73>AATATACCATATAGCTTTGTAGATTAGTGAAGGAAAAGAGAATGGTTTTATTAAATGGTTCAACAAAAGAAGGTTTATTGTATCTGAATTACCTGATGTAG>172
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24>~>24
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      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
4496>TTCTTATAAGTAAGGTTTATATGGATGATAGTAAGCCTTCATTTGGATATTATAGTAATAATTTGAAAGATGTCAAAGTTATAACTAAAGATAATGTTAA>4595
104<~<104
949>~>949
104<~<104
147<~<147
206<~<206
879>~>879
33<~<33
173>TTCTTATAAGTAAGGTTTATATGGATGATAGTAAGCCTTCATTTGGATATTATAGTAATAATTTGAAAGATGTCAAAGTTATAAGTAAAGATAATGTTAA>272
848<~<848
24>~>24
341>~>341

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      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
4596>TATATTAACAGGTATTATCTTAAGGATGATATAAAATCTCTCTTTCTTTGACTCTACAAGATGAAAAAATATAAAGTTAAATAGTGTGCATTTAGAT>4695
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949>~>949
104<~<104
147<~<147
206<~<206

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879>----->879
33>-----<33
273>TATATTAAACAGGTTATTATCTTAAGATGATATAAAAACTCTCTCTTCTTTGACTCTACAAGATGAAAAAACTATAAGTTAAATAGTGTGCATTTAGAT>372
848<-----<848
24>----->24
341>----->341

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*      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
4696>GAAAGTGGAGTAGCTGAGATTTTGAAGTTCATGAATAGAAAAGGTAATACAAATACTTCAGATTCTTTAATGAGCTTTTTAGAAAAGTATGAATATAAAAA>4795
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949>----->949
104<-----<104
147<-----<147
206<-----<206
879>----->879
33<-----<33
373>GAAAGTGGAGTAGCTGAGATTTTGAAGTTCATGAATAGAAAAGGTAATACAAATACTTCAGATTCTTTAATGAGCTTTTTAGAAAAGTATGAATATAAAAA>472
848<-----<848
24>----->24
341>----->341

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*      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
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949>----->949
104<-----<104
147~-----~147
206<-----<206
879>----->879
33<-----<33
473>GTATTTTCGTTAATTTCTTACAATCTAATATTAAGTTTAT~----->512
847<-----AAGTTTATATTAGATGCTAATTTTATAATAAGTGGTACTACTTCTATTGGCCAATTGAGTTTATTTG<780
24~-----~24
341>----->341

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      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
4896>TGATGAAATGATAATATACAACCATATTTTCATTAAGTTAATACACTAGAAACTAATTATACTTTATATGTAGGAAATAGACAAAATATGATAGTGGAA>4995
104>~~~~~<104
949>~~~~~>949
104>~~~~~<104
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879>~~~~~>879
33>~~~~~<33
512>~~~~~>512
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24>~~~~~>24
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[illegible]

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5096>TAATTTACCAAATATTTATACAGATGAAATAAAATAACGCCTGTATATGAAACAAATAATACTTATCCAGAAGTTATTGTATTAGATGCAAATTATAT>5195
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949>~~~~~>949
104<~~~~~<104
147<~~~~~<147
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879>~~~~~>879
33<~~~~~<33
512>~~~~~>512
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24~~~~~>24
341>~~~~~>341

```

```

      *           *           *           *           *           *           *           *           *
5196>AAATGAAAAAATAAATGTTAATATCAATGATCTATCTATACGATATGTATGGAGTAATGATGGTAATGATTTTTATTCTTATGTCAACTAGTGAAGAAAAT>5295
104<----->
949>----->949
104<----->
147>----->147

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206<~~~~~<206
879>~~~~~>879
33<~~~~~<33
512>~~~~~>512
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341>~~~~~>341

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* * * * *
5296>AAGGTGTCACAAGTTAAATAAGATTTCGTTAATGTTTTTAAAGATAAGACTTTGGCAAAATAAGCTATCTTTTAACTTTAGTGATAAAACAAGATGTACCTG>5395
104<~~~~~<104
949>~~~~~>949
104<~~~~~<104
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206<~~~~~<206
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33<~~~~~<33
512>~~~~~>512
379<AAGGTGTCACAAGTTAAATAAGATTTCGTTAATGTTTTTAAAGATAAGACTTTGGCAAAATAAGCTATCTTTTAACTTTAGTGATAAAACAAGATGTACCTG<280
24>~~~~~>24
341>~~~~~>341

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```

* * * * *
5396>TAAGTGAAATAATCTTATCATTACACCTTCATATTATGAGGATGGATTGATTGGCTATGATTGGGTCTAGTTTCTTTATATAATGAGAAATTTTATAT>5495
104<~~~~~<104
949>~~~~~>949
104<~~~~~<104
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33<~~~~~<33
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24>~~~~~>24
341>~~~~~>341

```

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* * * * *
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949>~~~~~>949
104<~~~~~<104
147<~~~~~<147
206<~~~~~<206
879>~~~~~>879
33<~~~~~<33
512>~~~~~>512
179<TAATAACTTTGGAATGATGGTATCTGGATTAATATATATTAATGATTCAATTATATTATTTTAAACCACCAGTAAATAATTTGAT~~~~~<96
25>~~~~~>~CCAGTAAATAATTTGATAACTGGATTGTGACT>57
341>~~~~~>341

```

```

* * * * *
5596>GTAGGCGATGATAAATACTACTTTAATCCAATTAATGGTGGAGCTGCTTCAATTGGAGAGACAATAATTGATGACAAAAATTATTATTTCAACCAAAGTG>5695
104<~~~~~<104
949>~~~~~>949
104<~~~~~<104
147<~~~~~<147
206<~~~~~<206
879>~~~~~>879
33<~~~~~<33
512>~~~~~>512
96<~~~~~<96
58>GTAGGCGATGATAAATACTACTTTAATCCAATTAATGGTGGAGCTGCTTCAATTGGAGAGACAATAATTGATGACAAAAATTATTATTTCAACCAAAGTG>157
341>~~~~~>341

```

```

* * * * *
5696>GAGTGTTACAAACAGGTGTATTTAGTACAGAAGATGGATTAAATATTTTGCCCCAGCTAATACACTTGATGAAAACCTAGAAGGAGAAGCAATTGATTT>5795
104<~~~~~<104
949>~~~~~>949
104<~~~~~<104
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206<~~~~~<206
879>~~~~~>879
33<~~~~~<33
512>~~~~~>512
96<~~~~~<96
158>GAGTGTTACAAACAGGTGTATTTAGTACAGAAGATGGATTAAATATTTTGCCCCAGCTAATACACTTGATGAAAACCTAGAAGGAGAAGCAATTGATTT>257
341>~~~~~>341

```

```

* * * * *
5796>TACTGGAATAATTTATTGACGAAATATTTATTTTGTATGATAATTATAGAGGAGCTGTAGAATGGAAAGAATTAGATGGTGAAATGCATTATTTT>5895
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949>~~~~~>949
104<~~~~~<104

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147<-----<147
206<-----<206
879>----->879
33<-----<33
512>----->512
96<-----<96
258>TACTGGAAATTAATTATTGACGAAATATTATTATTTTGGATGATAATTATAGAGGAGCTGTAGAATGGAAAGAATTAGATGGTGAATGCACTATTTT>357
341>----->341

```

```

      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
5896>AGCCCAGAAACAGGTAAAGCTTTTAAAGGTCTAAATCAAATAGGTGATTATAAACTACTATTTCAATTCTGATGGAGTTATGCAAAAAGGATTGTGTAGTA>5995
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949>----->949
104<-----<104
147<-----<147
206<-----<206
879>----->879
33<-----<33
512>----->512
96<-----<96
358>AGCCCAGAAACAGGTAAAGCTTTTAAAGGTCTAAATCAAATAGGTGATTATAAACTACTATTTCAATTCTGATGGAGTTATGCAAAAAGGATTGTGTAGTA>457
341>----->341

```

```

      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
5996>TAAATGATAATAAACACTATTTTGGATGATTCTGGTGTATGAAAGTAGGTTACACTGAAATAGATGGCAAGCATTTCCTACTTTGCTGAAAACGGAGAAAT>6095
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949>----->949
104<-----<104
147<-----<147
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879>----->879
33<-----<33
512>----->512
96<-----<96
458>TAAATGATAATAAACACTATTTTGGATGATTCTGGTGTATGAAAGTAGGTTACACTGAAATAGATGGCAAGCATTTCCTACTTTGCTGAAAACGGAGAAAT>557
341>----->341

```

```

      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
6096>GCAAAATAGGAGTATTTAATACAGAAGATGGATTTAAATATTTTCTCATCATAAATGAAGATTAGGAAATGAAGAAGGTGAAGAAATCTCATATTTCTGGT>6195
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949>----->949
104<-----<104
147<-----<147
206<-----<206
879>----->879
33<-----<33
512>----->512
96<-----<96
558>GCAAAATAGGAGTATTTAATACAGAAGATGGATTTAAATATTTTCTCATCATAAATGAAGATTAGGAAATGAAGAAGGTGAAGAAATCTCATATTTCTGGT>657
341>----->341

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```

      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
6196>ATATTAAATTTCAATAATAAAATTTACTATTTTGATGATTCATTACAGCTGTAGTTGGATGGAAAGATTAGAGGATGGTTCAAAGTATTATTTTGATG>6295
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949>----->949
104<-----<104
147<-----<147
206<-----<206
879>----->879
33<-----<33
512>----->512
96<-----<96
658>ATATTAAATTTCAATAATAAAATTTACTATTTTGATGATTCATTACAGCTGTAGTTGGATGGAAAGATTAGAGGATGGTTCAAAGTATTATTTTGATG>757
341>----->341

```

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      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
6296>AAGATACAGCAGAACATATATAGGTTTGTCATTAAATAAATGATGGTCAATATATTTTAAATGATGATGGAATTATGCAAGTTGGATTGTCACTATAAA>6395
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949>----->949
104<-----<104
147<-----<147
206<-----<206
879>----->879
33<-----<33
512>----->512
96<-----<96
758>AAGATACAGCAGAACATATATAGGTTTGTCATTAAATAAATGATGGTCAATATATTTTAAATGATGATGGAATTATGCAAGTTGGATTGTCACTATAAA>857
341>----->341

```

```

      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
6396>TGATAAAGTCTTCTACTTCTCTGACTCTGGAATTATAGAATCTGGAGTACAAAACATAGATGACAATTATTTCTATATAGATGATAATGGTATAGTTCAA>6495
104<-----<104
949>----->949

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104<-----<104
147<-----<147
206<-----<206
879>----->879
33<-----<33
512>----->512
96<-----<96
858>TGATAAGTCTTCTACTTCTCTGACTCTGGAATTATAGAATCTGGAGTACAAAACATAGATGACAATTATTTCTATATAGATGATAATGGTATAGTTCAA>957
341>----->341

      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
6496>ATTGGTGTATTTGATACTTCAGATGGATATAAATATTTTGCACCTGCTAATACTGTAAATGATAATATTTACGGACAAGCAGTTGAATATAGTGGTTTAG>6595
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949>----->949
104<-----<104
147<-----<147
206<-----<206
879>----->879
33<-----<33
512>----->512
96<-----<96
958>ATTGGTGTATTTGATACTTCAGATGGATATAAATATTTTGCACCTGCTAATACTGTAAATGA----->1019
342>----->341
      CTGTAAATGATAATATTTACGGACAAGCAGTTGAATATAGTGGTTTAG>389

      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
6596>TTAGAGTTGGGGAAGATGTATATTATTTTGGAGAAACATATACAATTGAGACTGGATGGATATATGATATGGAAAATGAAAGTGATAAATATTATTTCAA>6695
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949>----->949
104<-----<104
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879>----->879
33<-----<33
512>----->512
96<-----<96
1019>----->1019
390>TTAGAGTTGGGGAAGATGTATATTATTTTGGAGAAACATATACAATTGAGACTGGATGGATATATGATATGGAAAATGAAAGTGATAAATATTATTTCAA>489

      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
6696>TCCAGAAACTAAAAAGCATGCAAAGGTATTAATTTAATTGATGATATAAAATATTATTTTGATGAGAAGGGCATAATGAGAACCGGGTCTTATATCATT>6795
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949>----->949
104<-----<104
147<-----<147
206<-----<206
879>----->879
33<-----<33
512>----->512
96<-----<96
1019>----->1019
490>TCCAGAAACTAAAAAGCATGCAAAGGTATTAATTTAATTGATGATATAAAATATTATTTTGATGAGAAGGGCATAATGAGAACCGGGTCTTATATCATT>589

      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
6796>GAAAATAATAATTATTACTTTAATGAGAATGGTGAAATGCAATTTGGTTATATAAAATATAGAAGATAAGATGTTCTATTTTGGTGAAGATGGTGTTCATGC>6895
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949>----->949
104<-----<104
147<-----<147
206<-----<206
879>----->879
33<-----<33
512>----->512
96<-----<96
1019>----->1019
590>GAAAATAATAATTATTACTTTAATGAGAATGGTGAAATGCAATTTGGTTATATAAAATATAGAAGATAAGATGTTCTATTTTGGTGAAGATGGTGTTCATGC>689

      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
6896>AGATTGGAGTATTTAATACACCAGATGGATTAAATACTTTGCACATCAAAATACCTTTGGATGAGAATTTTGAGGGAGAATCAATAAACTATACGGTTG>6995
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949>----->949
104<-----<104
147<-----<147
206<-----<206
879>----->879
33<-----<33
512>----->512
96<-----<96
1019>----->1019
690>AGATTGGAGTATTTAATACACCAGATGGATTAAATACTTTGCACATCAAAATACCTTTGGATGAGAATTTTGAGGGAGAATCAATAAACTATACGGTTG>789

      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
6996>GTTAGATTTAGATGAAAAGAGATATTATTTT-ACAGATGAATATATTGCAGCAACTGGTTTCAGTTATTATTGATGGTGAGGAGTATTATTTTGATCCTGA>7094
104<-----<104

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206<~~~~~<206
879>~~~~~>879
33<~~~~~<33
512>~~~~~>512
96<~~~~~<96
1019>~~~~~>1019
790>GTTAGATTTAGATGAAAAGAGATATTATTTTACAGATGAATATATTGCAGCAACTGGTTCAGTTATTATTGATGGTGAGGAGTATTATTTTGATCCTGA>889

```

```

      *      *      *      *
7095>TACAGCTCAATTAGTGATTAGTGAAGggtacc~~~~~>7126
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949>~~~~~>949
104<~~~~~<104
147<~~~~~<147
206<~~~~~<206
879>~~~~~>879
33<~~~~~<33
512>~~~~~>512
96<~~~~~<96
1019>~~~~~>1019
890>TACAGCTCAATTAGTGATTAGTGAAGGGTACCGCCGCATGC>931

```

APPENDIX II: rTcdB-GTD-NVN Sequence Alignment

rTcdB_GTD_NVN.ape (insert from pBMJ_70402; colony 6) from 295 to 2240

Alignment to

_B03_colony6_M13Reverse_015.seq-- Matches:792; Mismatches:0; Gaps:1154; Unattempted:0
 _E02_colony6_B2F_004.seq-- Matches:271; Mismatches:0; Gaps:1675; Unattempted:0
 _F02_colony6_B2R_003.seq-- Matches:808; Mismatches:0; Gaps:1138; Unattempted:0
 _G02_colony6_B3F_002.seq-- Matches:76; Mismatches:0; Gaps:1870; Unattempted:0

```

      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
295>tgtacaATGAGTTTAGTTAATAGAAAACAGTTAGAAAAAATGGCAAATGTAAGATTTCGTACTCAAGAAGATGAATATGTTGCAATATTGGATGCTTTAG>394
54>TGTAACAATGAGTTTAGTTAATAGAAAACAGTTAGAAAAAATGGCAAATGTAAGATTTCGTACTCAAGAAGATGAATATGTTGCAATATTGGATGCTTTAG>153
647>~~~~~>647
842<~~~~~<842
72>~~~~~>72

```

```

      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
395>AAGAATATCATAATATATGTCAGAGAATACTGTAGTCGAAAAATATTTAAAAATTAAAGATATAAAATAGTTTAAACAGATATTATATAGATACATATAAAAA>494
154>AAGAATATCATAATATATGTCAGAGAATACTGTAGTCGAAAAATATTTAAAAATTAAAGATATAAAATAGTTTAAACAGATATTATATAGATACATATAAAAA>253
647>~~~~~>647
842<~~~~~<842
72>~~~~~>72

```

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      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
495>ATCTGGTAGAAATAAGCCTTAAAAAAATTTAAGGAATATCTAGTTACAGAAGTATTAGAGCTAAAGAATAATAATTTAACTCCAGTTGAGAAAAATTTA>594
254>ATCTGGTAGAAATAAGCCTTAAAAAAATTTAAGGAATATCTAGTTACAGAAGTATTAGAGCTAAAGAATAATAATTTAACTCCAGTTGAGAAAAATTTA>353
647>~~~~~>647
842<~~~~~<842
72>~~~~~>72

```

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      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
595>CATTTTGTGTTGGATTGGAGGTCAAATAAATGACACTGCTATTAATTATATAAAATCAATGGAAGATGTAAGTAGTGATTATAATGTTAATGTTTTTTATG>694
354>CATTTTGTGTTGGATTGGAGGTCAAATAAATGACACTGCTATTAATTATATAAAATCAATGGAAGATGTAAGTAGTGATTATAATGTTAATGTTTTTTATG>453
647>~~~~~>647
842<~~~~~<842
72>~~~~~>72

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      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
695>ATAGTAATGCATTTTGTGATAAACACATTGAAAAAACTGTAGTAGAATCAGCAATAAATGATACACTTGAATCATTTAGAGAAAACCTTAAATGACCCCTAG>794
454>ATAGTAATGCATTTTGTGATAAACACATTGAAAAAACTGTAGTAGAATCAGCAATAAATGATACACTTGAATCATTTAGAGAAAACCTTAAATGACCCCTAG>553
647>~~~~~>647
842<~~~~~<842
72>~~~~~>72

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      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
795>ATTTGACTATAATAAATCTTCAGAAAACGTATGGAATAAATTTATGATAAACAGAAAAATTCATAAACTACTATAAAGCTCAAAGAGAAGAAAAATCCT>894
554>ATTTGACTATAATAAATCTTCAGAAAACGTATGGAATAAATTTATGATAAACAGAAAAATTCATAAACTACTATAAAGCTCAAAGAGAAGAAAAATCCT>653
647>~~~~~>647
842<~~~~~<842
72>~~~~~>72

```

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      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
895>GAACCTATAATTGATGATATTGTAAAGACATATCTTTCAAATGAGTATTCAAAGGAGATAGATGAACCTAATACCTATATTGAAGAATCCTTAAATAAAA>994
654>GAACCTATAATTGATGATATTGTAAAGACATATCTTTCAAATGAGTATTCAAAGGAGATAGATGAACCTAATACCTATATTGAAGAATCCTTAAATAAAA>753
647>~~~~~>647
842<~~~~~<842
72>~~~~~>72

```

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      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
995>TTACACAGAATAGTGGAATGATGTTAGAACTTTGAAGAATTTAAAAATGGAGAGTCATTCAACTTATATGAACAAGAGTTGGTAGAAAGGTGGAATTT>1094
754>TTACACAGAATAGTGGAATGATGTTAGAACTTTGAAGAATTTAAAAATGGAGAGTCATTCAACTTATATGAACAAGAGTTGGTAGAAAGG~~~~~>845
648>~~~~~>648
842<~~~~~<842
72>~~~~~>72

```

```

      *           *           *           *           *           *           *           *           *
1095>AGCTGCTGCTTCTGACATATTAAGAATATCTGCATTAAAAGAAATGGTGGTATGTATTTAAATGTTAATATGTTACCAGGAATACAACCAGACTTATTT>1194
845>~~~~~>845
657>AGCTGCTGCTTCTGACATATTAAGAATATCTGCATTAAAAGAAATGGTGGTATGTATTTAAATGTTAATATGTTACCAGGAATACAACCAGACTTATTT>756
842<~~~~~<842
72>~~~~~>72

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      *           *           *           *           *           *           *           *           *
1195>GAGTCTATAGAGAAACCTAGTTCAGTAACAGTGGATTTTGGGAAATGACAAAGTTAGAAGCTATAATGAAATACAAAGAATATATACCAGAATATACCT>1294
845>~~~~~>845
757>GAGTCTATAGAGAAACCTAGTTCAGTAACAGTGGATTTTGGGAAATGACAAAGTTAGAAGCTATAATGAAATACAAAGAATATATACCAGAATATACCT>856
842<~~~~~<842
72>~~~~~>72

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      *           *           *           *           *           *           *           *           *
1295>CAGAACATTTTGACATGTTAGACGAAGAAGTTCAAAGTAGTTTTGAATCTGTTCTAGCTTCTAAGTCAGATAAAATCAGAAATATTCTCATCACTTGGTGA>1394
845>~~~~~>845
857>CAGAACATTTTGACATGTTAGACGAAGAAGTTCAAAGTAGTTTTGAATCTGTTCTAGCTTCT~>918
841<~~~~~<842
72>~~~~~>72

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      *           *           *           *           *           *           *           *           *
1395>TATGGAGGCATCACCAC TAGAAGTTAAAATTGCATTTAATAGTAAGGGTATTATAAATCAAGGGCTAATTTCTGTGAAAGACTCATATTGTAGCAATTTA>1494
845>~~~~~>845
918>~~~~~>918
803<TATGGAGGCATCACCAC TAGAAGTTAAAATTGCATTTAATAGTAAGGGTATTATAAATCAAGGGCTAATTTCTGTGAAAGACTCATATTGTAGCAATTTA>704
72>~~~~~>72

```

```

      *           *           *           *           *           *           *           *           *
1495>ATAGTAAAACAAATCGAGAATAGATATAAAATATTGAATAATAGTTTAAATCCAGCTATTAGCGAGGATAATGATTTTAATACTACAACGAATACCTTTA>1594
845>~~~~~>845
918>~~~~~>918
703<ATAGTAAAACAAATCGAGAATAGATATAAAATATTGAATAATAGTTTAAATCCAGCTATTAGCGAGGATAATGATTTTAATACTACAACGAATACCTTTA>604
72>~~~~~>72

```

```

      *           *           *           *           *           *           *           *           *
1595>TTGATAGTATAATGGCTGAAGCTAATGCAGATAATGGTAGATTTATGATGGAAGTATTTAAGAGTTGGTTTCTTCCCAGATGTTAAACTAC>1694
845>~~~~~>845
918>~~~~~>918
603<TTGATAGTATAATGGCTGAAGCTAATGCAGATAATGGTAGATTTATGATGGAAGTAGGAAAGTATTTAAGAGTTGGTTTCTTCCCAGATGTTAAACTAC>504
72>~~~~~>72

```

```

      *           *           *           *           *           *           *           *           *
1695>TATTAACCTTAAGTGGCCCTGAAGCATATGCGGCAGCTTATCAAGATTTATTAATGTTTAAAGAAGGCAGTATGAATATCCATTTGATAGAAGCTGATTTA>1794
845>~~~~~>845
918>~~~~~>918
503<TATTAACCTTAAGTGGCCCTGAAGCATATGCGGCAGCTTATCAAGATTTATTAATGTTTAAAGAAGGCAGTATGAATATCCATTTGATAGAAGCTGATTTA>404
72>~~~~~>72

```

```

      *           *           *           *           *           *           *           *           *
1795>AGAAACTTTGAAATCTCTAAACTAATATTTCTCAATCAACTGAACAAGAAATGGCTAGCTTATGGTCATTTGACGATGCAAGAGCTAAAGCTCAATTTG>1894
845>~~~~~>845
918>~~~~~>918
403<AGAAACTTTGAAATCTCTAAACTAATATTTCTCAATCAACTGAACAAGAAATGGCTAGCTTATGGTCATTTGACGATGCAAGAGCTAAAGCTCAATTTG>304
72>~~~~~>72

```

```

      *           *           *           *           *           *           *           *           *
1895>AAGAAATATAAAAGGAATATTTTGAAGGTTCTCTTGGTGAAGATGATAATCTTGATTTTCTCAAAATATAGTAGTTGACAAGGAGTATCTTTTAGAAAA>1994
845>~~~~~>845
918>~~~~~>918
303<AAGAAATATAAAAGGAATATTTTGAAGGTTCTCTTGGTGAAGATGATAATCTTGATTTTCTCAAAATATAGTAGTTGACAAGGAGTATCTTTTAGAAAA>204
72>~~~~~>72

```

```
      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
1995>AATATCTTCATTAGCAAGAAGTTCAGAGAGAGGATATATACACTATATTGTTTCAGTTACAAGGAGATAAAATTAGTTATGAAGCAGCATGTAACCTATTT>2094
845>~~~~~>845
918>~~~~~>918
203<AATATCTTCATTAGCAAGAAGTTCAGAGAGAGGATATATACACTATATTGTTTCAGTTACAAGGAGATAAAATTAGTTATGAAGCAGCATGTAACCTATTT<104
72>~~~~~>72
```

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      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *      *
2095>GCAAAGACTCCTTATGaTAGTGTACTATTTTCAGAAAAATATAGAAGATTCAGAAATTGCATATTATTATAATCCTGGAGATGGTGAAATACAAGAAATAG>2194
845>~~~~~>845
918>~~~~~>918
103<GCAAAGACTCCTTATGATAGTGTACTATTTTCAGAAAAATATAGAAGATTCAGAAATTGCATATTATTATA~>34
73>~~~~~ATCCTGGAGATGGTGAAATACAAGAAATAG>102
```

```
      *      *      *      *      *
2195>ACAAGTATAAAATTCCAAGTATAATTCTGATAGACCTAAGATTAA>2240
845>~~~~~>845
918>~~~~~>918
34<~~~~~<34
103>ACAAGTATAAAATTCCAAGTATAATTCTGATAGACCTAAGATTAA>148
```

APPENDIX III: *pBMJ Plasmid Constructs*

Plasmid Name	Parent Vector	Insert	Size (bp)	Primers Used ^c	Restriction Enzymes Used	Resistance Marker
pBMJ_130401	pHis1522 ^a	<i>tcdB</i> -WT ^b	14458	1 & 2	BsrG1/Kpn1	Amp (<i>E. coli</i>); Tet (<i>B. meg</i>)
pBMJ_70401	pCR-XL-TOPO	<i>tcdB</i> -GTD	5902	1 & 3	BsrG1/BsaB1	Kan
pBMJ_70402	pBMJ_70401 (pCR-XL-TOPO)	<i>tcdB</i> -GTD-NVN	5902	4 & 5 (SDM)	-	Kan

NOTE: Grey indicates protein expression plasmids. ^ai.e. pANK_80403; created by modifying pWH1520.⁵⁰
^bIsolated from *C. difficile* genomic DNA (ATTC 9689D-5 DR). ^cSee **Table 2**.

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ABSTRACT

Clostridium difficile (*C. diff*) is an anaerobic, spore-forming pathogen responsible for hospital-acquired *C. diff*-associated diseases (CDAD) that are extremely common following patient treatment with broad-spectrum antibiotics. Symptoms of CDAD range from excessive diarrhea, colonic inflammation, pseudomembranous colitis, and in extreme cases, death. Although enterotoxins A and B (TcdA and TcdB, respectively) are the main virulence factors involved and antibiotic-resistant strains are continually emerging today, antibiotic treatment remains the most common method against CDAD. The work presented here details a potential anti-toxin therapeutic utilizing an epoxide-containing peptide (NH₂-HQSPG_{epoxy}HHGGGC-CONH₂) that covalently crosslinks the enzymatic domain of TcdA and has shown to inhibit glucosyltransferase activity in a concentration and time-dependent manner. While further analysis is still needed, anti-toxin, peptide-based agents as such show promising potential for an advanced remedy against CDAD.